BLUEPRINT

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ON THE COVER:

This year, as violence against Asian Americans continues to plague the country, lanterns no longer symbolize only hope, prosperity, cleansing, but also protection against hatred and xenophobia.

COVER SPREADS AND DESIGN BY ANNA YIANNIKOS

Principal Travis Bell Retires from Public Education

After nine years at Acalanes, Travis Bell leaves to take a leading role in his family's business

Brendan Connelly, Zach Snyder, and Andrew Habas | Staff Writers

Over the past nine years, Principal Travis Bell has been instrumental in crafting the Acalanes community that students cherish today. While Bell takes leave at a unique and difficult time, his leadership at Acalanes recognizably helped lay the foundation for the return to school.

Bell announced his upcoming retirement from public education this coming June to join his father-in-law's efforts and support his family business.

During Bell's nine-year-tenure at Acalanes, he spent his first four years as an associate principal, and five years ago, he assumed the role of principal. During this time, he led Acalanes to form a more united and inclusive community.

Bell took a strong initiative to make sure every student felt included and comfortable at school through his strong leadership qualities and hard work.

Associate Principal Mike Plant had a brief history with Bell prior to working with him.

"I met Mr. Bell when I joined Acalanes three years ago although we knew each other distantly as I worked as a teacher previously and we had been on a couple of committees together," Plant said.

Once Bell and Plant met at Acalanes, they achieved great things for Acalanes, and both contributed to building the community we have today.

"I think we have a really united staff, student body, and community and much of that is due to Mr. Bell's leadership. He pays attention to every aspect, makes people feel valued, and, above all, listens to the people around him," Plant said.

Every day, Bell works to ensure students have the best learning environment possible. His hard work, however, often goes unnoticed as he does not have as direct of a connection with individual students as a teacher might.

"You cannot out-work Mr. Bell. He is at every event. He never complains or makes excuses to miss something or avoid an obligation. He sacrifices his 'free' time more than anyone else really knows. He never goes half-effort. In that way, he truly leads by example," Plant said.

One of Bell's early accomplishments as Principal was managing the transition to the block schedule. In this updated schedule, students attend their classes three times a week for a longer period of time than before. In recent years, Acalanes has adjusted well to this new schedule, even accommodating the addition of an Academy period where students can study and meet with teachers.

"We put a lot of emphasis and focus on really building the belief and, and the systems to support the belief that all students can learn and achieve high levels," Bell said. "And I think we've created systems, where students are able to get support and intervention, as well as further and deepen their learnings in the classroom, through this academy period, and have worked really hard to make that an effective experience on our campus."

Bell also led Acalanes in creating curriculum, hosting events, creating opportunities for dialogue, and a more engaged, inclusive community at the school.

"I would say the community aspect of helping to build a supportive, inclusive, engaged community from students, parents, staff, and community members has increased over my nine years here at Acalanes. And while that's a testament to a lot of people doing a lot of work to make that happen, I do feel like that's something that I was able to help lead and facilitate in my time as principal," Bell said.

Deeply connected to the goal of creating a more inclusive community, Bell led the development of curricula to help Acalanes students and staff engage in difficult conversations about race and equity, encouraging a bonded community.

"Engagement in community connectedness has come through our work with helping to build some curriculum that allows us to step into some difficult conversations around race and equity and access," Bell said. "And I have never been more proud of our staff and our students than I have over these last couple of years. They really took that to heart and stepped into the work that I think is necessary and essential."

Blueprint Photo/Anna Yiannikos

Since Bell will leave this June, the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) has begun the process of hiring a new principal. The application process will last a month and interviews begin after spring break. The hope is to hire relatively quickly in order to create a seamless transition before the next school year.

"When we have had recent principal openings, we have followed a similar process [at other schools in the AUHSD] where the AUHSD administration gathers input through a survey from the community members and staff asking for input about desired attributes in a new principal," Associate Superintendent of Educational Services Aida Glimme said. "We also hold some meetings with students to gather student input. Candidates are identified for interviews and they go through a rather intense multi-panel and multi-day interview process."

While Bell finishes his final school year at Acalanes, the AUHSD is searching for a new candidate to fill the role of principal.

"We are looking for someone who has a strong educational background and would be the right fit based on the identified needs. We always like when one of our internal candidates is promoted within but we hire the best candidate for the job and that could be an in-

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Lafayette Library and Learning Center Hosts Author Vivian Kirkfield

Kirkfield's book "From Here to There Inventions That Changed the Way the World Moves" follows the stories of two women and their meaningful contributions to history

Erin Hambidge, Gabriella Gruber, Alexandra Ames | Staff Writers

As a center of communal culture and knowledge, the Lafayette Library plays a fundamental role in the local community. Following International Women's Day on March 8, the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation turned its focus to women's meaningful contributions to history through displays of the works of female authors across the United States.

The Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation hosted author Vivian Kirkfield on March 9 as part of a larger endeavor to incorporate diverse reading material into local elementary schools' curricula.

Kirkfield's book, "From Here to There: Inventions That Changed the Way the World Moves," follows two women who largely contributed to influential inventions in history yet received little acknowledgment for their achievements.

"One of the things that brought me to this particular book was the stories themselves that this particular book, along with some of the other storytimes, that we've been doing since last October, gives you insight into what I would call unsung heroes, people you may not have heard about, but that made an impact on our lives," Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation Programs Director Sarah Blumenfeld said.

The online format of the webinar allowed the foundation to access a broader selection of authors, including Kirkfield, who lives on the East Coast.

"One of the advantages of being able to do it as a webinar is our authors are not local. Vivian's in New Hampshire, and we don't have the resources to financially fly somebody [out] to be here in person, so it'd be very hard to make that happen...Virtual gives us a chance to bring in speakers from farther away," Blumenfeld said.

Although Kirkfield is a children's book author, the messages she explores in her work allow audiences of all ages to relate to her writing.

Courtesy Photo/Vivian Kirkfield

"Whenever I'm presenting or reading any of my stories, it is to inspire other people whether they're six years old, or whether they're 60 years old, or [even] 16 years old, because we all have hopes and dreams and plans of what might be," Kirkfield said.

The ideas conveyed in her writing tie in closely with Kirkfield's own backstory, as she began her career as an author later in life. In fact, it was not until Kirkfield went skydiving one day that she realized her dream of becoming an author could become a reality.

"I knew that if I could jump out of a perfectly good airplane I could do anything," Kirkfield said during the meeting.

Kirkfield's motivation in writing "From Here to There Inventions That Changed the Way the World Moves" stemmed from her desire to present the parts of history often glossed over by textbooks.

"Women make up at least half the population of the world. And so, that's a big part of what history should have shown us, but unfortunately, over many years history hasn't really shown us, especially American history," Kirkfield said.

The larger discussion about women's history prompted by her work led Kirkfield to reflect on how far society has progressed in terms of women's rights.

"When I got married in 1967, I had a bachelor's degree in education, I was a teacher, and I was married, and I could not get my own credit card. My husband had to cosign for my credit card," Kirkfield said.

Many attendees found Kirkfield's work very educational and highlighted the insufficient attention given to women's history in schools' curricula.

"I thought it was really interesting because most of the women she mentioned in her book I had never heard of before. It really made me realize how little I know about women's history," sophomore Taylor Carlin said.

The topics discussed throughout the event underscored the need to educate younger generations on women's history, and attendees believed that through the work of children's authors like Kirkfield, it is possible to celebrate women's achievements beyond the month of March.

"Obviously it's women's history month but I think it's important to always celebrate women's history...because as children we don't really learn that much about women's history. I think that is why her books are so important," Carlin said.

That education starts with places like the library, which provides opportunities for all citizens to learn more about history.

"[The library] is a free access to information, something that our democracy is built on. To have such a vibrant, strong library in our community is one of the things that makes Lafayette a great place to live," Blumenfeld said.

Principal Bell

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ternal or external candidate," Glimme said.

Associate Principal Andrea Powers knew Bell well before he became Acalanes' principal, and was able to work with him before they became co-partners, along with Mr. Plant.

"I have known Mr. Bell since 2009 when we both worked in the San Ramon Unified School District. We kept in touch when he left to come over to Acalanes and I was elated to be able to work with him again when I moved over here," Powers said.

Throughout her time at Acalanes, Powers has learned a lot from Mr. Bell.

"Mr. Bell is one of the most encouraging, supportive, and admirable principals I have ever worked with. I have learned more over the last three years from him than I could have ever imagined. I am grateful for his leadership because it inspires me to want to learn and do more for our Acalanes community," Powers said.

AUHSD Schools Reopen for Hybrid Learning

After weeks of projections and falling COVID-19 rates, the District reopens schools for a return.

Marisa Guerra Echeverria and Erin Hambidge | Staff Writers

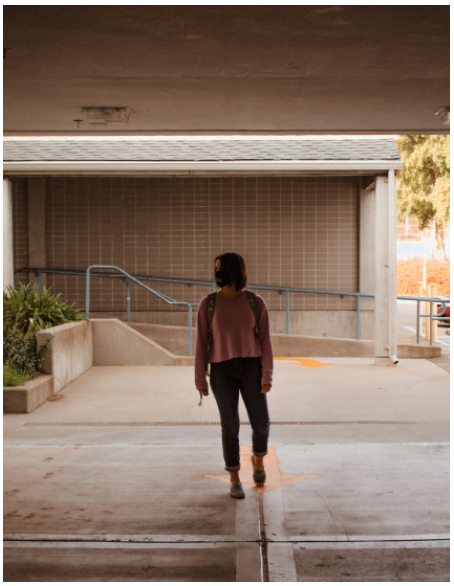
As flowers bloom and hills turn green, bursts of voices echo through a once-deserted campus. Bright yellow arrows direct students down a new path for in-person instruction. Spring is here, and with it, life returns to Acalanes High School.

On March 16, the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) authorized a return to in-person instruction via hybrid learning for Acalanes students and staff after an entire school year of distance learning.

In accordance with the inconsistent COVID-19 numbers, students and staff alike found the return to hybrid learning fraught with uncertainty and constant change. On Nov. 18, the AUHSD approved the new hybrid learning schedule and ruled that hybrid learning would only start after two weeks in the red tier per Governor Gavin Newsom's instruction. Based on Contra Costa County's COVID-19 projections, Acalanes expected to begin hybrid learning on Jan. 5, a date the District could not meet due to increasing COVID-19 numbers.

After several tumultuous projections, the AUHSD finally landed on March 16 for a starting date as health officials expected Contra Costa County to drop into the red tier by then. One struggle in settling on a starting date included a debate over the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) previous five-day waiting period for high schools entering the red tier, which the CDPH rescinded in late Feb.

"So when [the CDPH] initially issued their guidelines in January, they said [that] when schools reach their [target] reopening mark, they have to wait five days and then they can [reopen with students]...So that rule was written for everybody, but high schools weren't waiting for [a case rate], we were waiting for the red tier. And the red tier already had a five-day [waiting period] built-in...So it really just eliminated the redundancy," Associate Superintendent of Educational Services Aida Glimme said.



Blueprint Graphic/Zoe Edelman

This shift in the red-tier waiting period for high schools was one of many changes enforced by the District in COVID-19 parameters and regulations, which included a new pathway for red tier status: accelerated progression.

"So there's a metric of seven per hundred thousand new cases per day...and then there was the equity metric and the testing ratio percentage which have always been the mark [for red tier]. [It] is really buried deep in the guidance that if your other two numbers, the testing rate, or the equity metric, are in the orange tier while you're in purple for the case rate for two weeks, you can actually get accelerated into the red tier. It's called an accelerated progression," Glimme said.

While anticipating red tier status over the last several months, Acalanes implemented new safety precautions to ensure student and staff safety on campus. These additions include structural changes to classrooms and established rules to guarantee that students follow COVID-19 safety guidelines.

"We've redone all of the ventilation to filter out the air which is going to be good for decreasing the spread of COVID-19... we have mandatory masking, of course, and mandatory distancing," Governing Board President Dr. Christopher Severson said.

The preparations also extend down to the smallest details, such as the organization of desks to maintain distance and increased cleaning personnel and facilities.

"We have lots of hand sanitizer available. We have lots of cleaning supplies available so we're going to have students wipe down the desks," Dr. Severson said.

In further preparation for the return to hybrid, Acalanes teachers began receiving their vaccinations after Gov. Newsom designated 10 percent of state vaccines to school employees in late February.

"The teachers are all on a group email through the teacher's union and my teacher colleagues were so helpful to everyone by letting us know when vaccines were available and how to get them. The district administration was also communicating with us regularly but the collective of teachers sharing information is what got so many teachers vaccinated this month," Spanish teacher Monika Voellm said.

As teacher vaccinations ramped up in late February, so did staff plans for an in-person return to hybrid. While teachers prepared with staff development days the week before, schooling was asynchronous for students.

This asynchronous week included two days for students to study the schools' COVID-19 safety precautions in-depth. In order to comply with the County's safety training requirements, students followed a module on Canvas to learn more about the hybrid schedule and how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"[The District's] main goal was that you're really aware of how to protect yourself...We needed to make sure that not only the students need to learn if they haven't so far from resources that are scientifically proven but also be really aware of what's happening on each campus and what the rules are and then you commit to them," Glimme said.

As students learned of COVID-19 safety protocols in hybrid learning, teachers had to adjust to new hybrid measures that impacted their way of teaching. In February, the District mandated that all teachers teach from their classrooms as opposed to their homes in order to familiarize them with the new classroom and campus layout. The real adjustment the staff faced was teaching multiple groups of students both in-person and online.

"There's obviously going to be a few adjustments to having actual students, physically in the classroom as opposed to just on zoom. And I think the more of the training is going to involve, how to best teach basically three groups of peo-

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ple," Dr. Severson said.

Faced with the challenges of accommodating three different classes at once, teachers relied on two different methods to plan their lessons for the first week of hybrid.

"We have the option to have everyone together each day and continue teaching like distance learning or to do a flip-flop where we do one lesson with A cohort while B cohort is doing asynchronous work and then switch the next day," Voellm said. "I am reserving the right to adapt our process as needed and as the students tell me what is working for them and what is not."

While staff prepared their lesson plans, students returning to in-person learning attended mandatory orientations from March 9 to March 12. The administration divided the orientations by grade and alphabet, with the seniors first on March 9 and the freshman last on March 12. For many freshmen, it was their first time on campus.

"It felt really surreal...I helped with scheduling the orientations, so I knew some of the things and I got to go with my friends, so it's just a really fun experience to tour with them," freshman Gabe Gardner said.

After the passing of a year since most students attended school on campus, some feel that the sudden change to in-person learning may feel rushed to meet the exact anniversary date of the cancellation of in-person school last year.

"We put a lot of importance on celebrating anniversaries and as a year-long anniversary for COVID-19 comes, even if it is subconscious, a lot of the people on the board and the staff that decide these things are feeling pressure. It's everywhere on the news and all over social media, and people talk about it all the time that March is approaching soon so I think there's a lot of unavoidable, internalized pressure from that," sophomore Jou Yoshida said.

Additionally, some teachers believe that the sudden transition to the red tier and the weeklong preparation period for hybrid learning allowed little time for curriculum planning on-site.

"[The transition time was] enough time but at the same time I wish I had more time to kind of get things into place. But I think as a teacher, that's kind of how we are, we're never really as ready as we'd like to be. We get thrown into situations a lot and it's like, well, do your best with what you got. And that's what we do," Spanish teacher Gretchen Schwab said.

Another element that came with the return to in-person learning is a monetary incentive for California schools to reopen by April 1 through May 15, with 2 billion and 4.6 billion dollar allocations to address additional safety costs and learning loss respectively in public schools, which may benefit AUHSD schools.

"[California Congress] signed the legislature that just passed incentivizing schools to return. There's some funding from the state coming in, should [schools] be reopened by April 1, which we will. So regardless of that legislature passing, we were on track to open up. But with this, there'll be actually some one-time funding coming in to support some of the efforts that we're doing. So we'll be able to cover some more professional development or whatever else...but it will be able to recoup some of the money that [Gov. Newsom] incentivized schools to reopen," Glimme said.

Some students worry about the return to the hybrid model immediately after spring break, fearing for the spike in COVID-19 cases that usually follows a school holiday.

"Considering how [COVID-19] cases skyrocketed back in November with Thanksgiving break and again…after winter break in December, I think it's unsafe to go back to school right before spring break…If students and staff go partying or on vacation and go see family and friends during break and then just come back to school without getting tested or without quarantine it basically guarantees the fact that the risk factor of going to school is a lot higher than it should be," Yoshida said.

This concern stems from the absence of travel quarantine requirements put in for the return to hybrid learning, as the District views local COVID-19 transmissions as a more pressing concern.

"...We did not put a travel [restriction] in our compact because we felt like travel in and of itself was not the dangerous thing; the dangerous thing is getting together with a bunch of people, and you can do that with your neighbors on the street, and that could be more of a problem in transmitting COVID than if you go with your family to the next state over...That said, a lot of [elementary schools] have that because [it was part of] the state's... recommendations for schools reopening. But again, we chose not to adopt that specific thing," Dr. Severson said.

In the event of a COVID-19 spike after this period in hybrid learning, the tier parameters allow for AUHSD schools to remain open even if they fall back into the purple tier, but only if the schools maintain under a certain number of cases.

"So, if we have a COVID-19 spike, then we will see what the county tells us.... As of right now, it does not seem like the County would necessarily stop in-person instruction if we had a surge. So, in the case of a surge, we'd be able to continue in-person instruction, but we would have to follow our numbers closely and make sure we're not having a lot of transmissions happening on campus," Dr. Severson said.

Until spring break, students will remain in hybrid learning for two weeks. After the school experienced its first week of hybrid classes, students and teachers alike found adjusting to be a significant challenge.

"I think just because it was my first week, there were still some bumps that teachers were working out. Like I know in science classes when we're taking data for labs, only one group can go up at a time. I didn't get my data until halfway through the period," senior Megan Baginski said. "Group work is really hard these days. If you're trying to work over one handout, it doesn't work. So I think those are things that can be adjusted to with time, but right off the bat it was not working."

In addition to struggles with the in-person curriculum, teachers found a learning curve in juggling two online cohorts and one in-person cohort at a time with the limitations of technology.

"It is really challenging to do my teaching from my desk so the Zoomers [Zoom students] can hear [and] ask questions because that is something we are taught specifically not to do when you learn how to be a teacher," science teacher Sydney Johnson said.

Even when keeping up with all three cohorts at a time, students and teachers had trouble navigating students in-person and online during in-class assessments, which brought up the issue of academic dishonesty and inequity between the cohorts.

"In regards to testing, it seems unfair that half the class will test online while the other half tests in-person. Some of my teachers have acknowledged this, and I hope they will find a way to make everything equitable," junior Jane Bishop said.

Many students also struggled with class scheduling with the new cohort schedule, which consists of back-to-back block days of their classes and requires some to complete entire workloads for harder Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes on a nightly basis.

"My biggest concern is how my teachers are going to assign homework and tests. Given that we will not have a traditional block schedule, completing all of my homework in one night will be challenging, especially with AP/Honors classes," Bishop said.

Further concerns with AP classes include the pressure for teachers to cover all the required material in a changing hybrid environment in time for AP exams later in the spring.

"Now that the hybrid timeline has been triggered, I, like many of my colleagues, am working to plan out what the rest of the year will look like in terms of lessons and curriculum. Of course, I

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Students Fundraise to Fight Blood Cancer

A team of students raised $21,384 to support the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS)

Zach Snyder | Staff Writer

Approximately every three minutes, a person in the United States is diagnosed with a type of blood cancer; furthermore, in 2020, about 10 percent of new cancer cases were related to Leukemia, Lymphoma, or Myeloma.

From Feb. 18 through March 6, a group of Acalanes students collaborated in the second annual Student of the Year fundraiser to support the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS).

LLS has a variety of campaigns throughout the year to raise funds for research and cancer treatment. A particular program, Students of the Year, is designed as a philanthropic leadership and development program for exemplary high school students.

"[We] foster professional skills like entrepreneurship, marketing, project management, in order to raise funds for LLS," LLS Campaign Development Manager Megan Casey said.

This year's group consisted of nine sophomores: Juliana Upp, Nikki Mccarthy, Jacque Peacock, Natalie Hiatt, Haley Rurka, Erin Hambidge, Colin Norstad, Miller Smith, and Cate Condy. Upp assumed the role of team leader for the "Lamorinda Cancer Crushers 2.0."

Last year, Mitchell Franklin and Riley Perlman ran this fundraiser as the "Lamorinda Cancer Crushers," beginning the legacy.

"I chose to take part in this because I like to help people and my grandma died of Lymphoma so this was a perfect opportunity to raise money for a cure," Franklin said. "My goal, along with my co-leader Riley Perlman, was to raise the most money that we could while keeping our team motivated to do the same. Every single penny counts and it was cool to see the difference teenagers could make."

Cancer touched the lives of the majority of the Lamorinda Cancer Crushers 2.0. Their experiences, through friends and family, drove their motivations to create this successful fundraiser.

"It's rare to find someone who hasn't been touched by the pain and suffering of uncured diseases. That's why when I was approached to join this group of dynamic teens, I knew it was an opportunity to try and make a difference, and I'm extremely grateful to be a part of an organization that strives to promote change," sophomore Cate Condy said.

Typically, fundraising for this program consists of in-person events and outreach in a variety of ways. This year, however, there were obvious complications. Though the limitations of COVID-19 protocols required adapting and perseverance, the group found new ways to conduct their fundraising.

"Our team has raised most of the money through small donations. Many members had success in posting a fundraiser on Facebook and on other social media," sophomore Colin Norstad said. "Additionally, we sent out letters and emails to people asking them for their support. Two weeks ago, Juliana, Erin, and I had a bake sale as another way to raise money. Covid has been a bit of a complication because it limits how we can fundraise making it more of a virtual event."

Educating the public and spreading awareness for this common illness is a priority for this group. Their fundraising money directly supports current research for LLS. Equally as important, their outreach and engagement with the community establish networks of future supporters.

"My goal is to help others recognize and support The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, which means raising awareness and contributing towards fundraising critical research, which not only benefits these two diseases but all cancers that affect patients and their families," Condy said.

This year, The Lamorinda Cancer Crushers 2.0 established a strong name for themselves within LLS. They met and surpassed their goal of $20,000 by $1,384, the second-most in the East Bay. Nationwide, Students of the Year have left a strong footprint in battling cancer.

Courtesy Photo/LLS

According to LLS, there are over 1,100 Candidate Teams Across the Country and 11,000+ Fundraising Team Members. Since 1990, the Students of the Year program has raised over $74 million purely from student volunteers.

These students are not only impacting the lives of those suffering from cancer, but they are also motivation for others to step up and continue to fight for important causes.

"I personally get really inspired by all of the kids that we work with. I work with a lot of adults too, and that's great, but just to know that the next generation is thinking about ways that they can impact their community and make a difference to cancer patients, I think is one of the most rewarding parts about it," Casey said.

While this year's event has passed, the battle against cancer is ongoing. Participants and the LLS deeply believe in supporting cancer research and advocacy year-round with the eventual hope of a cancer-free future.

"Although our fundraising campaign ends March 6th the fight against cancer is not ending. Donating or raising money for an organization like LLS makes a cancer-free future possible," Norstad said. "LLS has helped millions impacted by cancer throughout its more than 70-year history, even funding breakthrough blood cancer research to advance lifesaving treatments and cures that is now helping patients with other cancers and diseases. Another way to help out is to show support and offer a hand to anyone you know who is fighting cancer."

Lafayette General Plan Committee Drafts City Housing Plan

Lafayette's GPAC begins the preparation of the 20-year General Plan, inviting community input from all ages.

Zack Lara | Staff Writer

Blueprint Photo/Jojo Bishop

Residents and visitors alike recognize the suburban bubble of Lafayette for its natural beauty and wealthy population. Beneath the quiet pocket of Northern California, however, rural tradition bends under the muscle of evolution. Will modernization trump history and heritage? Who even decides? The updated General Plan will answer this question by employing diverse community involvement, paging the youth to govern the city's future.

The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) met with Lafayette residents and organizations over the month of March to structure an updated blueprint for city housing as part of the 2040 General Plan. The volunteer committee grants a platform to community members to shape the future of Lafayette over the next 20 years.

Besides community concerns, the GPAC must consider Bay Area regulations like the allocation of affordable housing units, open space and environmental reserves, and sustainability. In addition to housing, the General Plan outlines several other core elements, including safety, land use, and circulation. Since the housing element directly impacts many of these, GPAC will tackle it first.

GPAC initiated the planning process for the housing element in late 2020. In the wake of COVID-19 restrictions, the committee used its creativity to engage with the community in new spaces. Instead of in-person seminars, GPAC hosted virtual meetings to gather input from residents and organizations.

"We had a series of town halls for people of all four Lafayette districts and for specific groups like non-profits," GPAC Youth Commissioner Namratha Kasalanati said. "We are going to be engaging with the public and hear from everyone about what values, vision, and mission they see Lafayette should have."

Kasalanati asserts the committee's mission to prioritize the voice of Lafayette residents. She reached out to local high schools, inviting students to partake in weekly seminars and submit feedback online.

"I will be sending out emails to various groups at Acalanes, Campolindo, and other schools in the community to engage with highschoolers and invite them to join workshops and participate in the online platform," Kasalanati said.

GPAC Chair Chris Lee echoed the call for community engagement, inciting students to shape their future city.

"We are really interested in what you have to say," Lee said. "Don't feel like because you are not old enough to vote or don't have time to attend meetings that you do not have an opinion."

Past trends indicate that local youth often return to Lafayette to raise families. Lee says the 2040 General Plan will dictate the city that current students return to, making their input that much more valuable to their future selves.

The young generation has already advocated for a number of angles and interests in the General Plan, including environmental concerns, diversity and inclusion, and preserving Lafayette's character.

"A lot of the issues around traffic, schools, fire danger, have already been brought up by various community members," Kasalanati said. "On the other side, we've had other issues about affordability and people being priced out of Lafayette. We're hearing from both sides and our job is to follow the state's requirements and the region's requirements and try to balance the concerns."

Due to the Bay Area Housing Crisis and growing diversity and inclusion efforts, affordable housing will be a key element of the General Plan. Under GPAC's diversity and inclusion initiative, the city will allocate 15 percent of units from each new development as affordable housing. GPAC will draft further goals based on community input.

Inclusive Lafayette is a community organization pledged to promoting inclusion and environmental sustainability in Lafayette. Acalanes alumni and Inclusive Lafayette board member John Kalil says they aim to ensure the General Plan affirms affordable housing, re-zones outside downtown Lafayette, and develops transit-oriented units around the BART station.

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SHRIDA'S SYSTEMS

Diversity Work on Campus

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

In the summer of 2020, videos of Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) students saying derogatory and racist slurs spread virally through the Lamorinda community. In an effort to make AUHSD schools a safer space, the District continues to work with student leaders and teachers on diversity-related issues.

As the AUHSD continues efforts to promote inclusion, student leaders similarly work on increasing equity on campus.

Equity leaders increased their efforts in a time where COVID-19 hindered the ability of in-person events or activities. Many leaders consider these in-person events vital, therefore this created many issues with programming.

"It is hard to have equity events over distance because I think in-person events are a lot more personal. At times, during distance events, people will turn their cameras off or be doing other things on the side at the same time. Being involved in equity work can also be tiring because being on Zoom all of the time is sometimes not fun. Hopefully, as we start to return to hybrid, we will be able to have more in-person student interaction with equity work," senior Madison Payne said.

Other students believed distance learning, however, brought a new and valuable aspect to equity work.

"I think over distance I was actually able to go to a lot more events involving equity. I think in-person was hard because a lot of times it would be at lunch and sometimes I would want to spend time with my friends but in distance [learning], I have been a lot more involved in equity work in general," junior Tessa Chan said.

Many student leaders needed time to adapt to the new setting of Zoom, but ended up finding success in it.

"I think there were a lot of opportunities to get involved and make our voice heard this year. Even though it was virtual I think we were able to get through to the actual work," Payne said.

Blueprint Graphic/Zoe Edelman

The work of several equity leaders began with CARE (Compassion, Acceptance, Respect, Empathy) Week. During the week, leaders ran workshops and taught curriculum to their peers, aimed at discussing intersectionality, the interconnectedness nature of race, sex, and gender that bring about different versions of discrimination.

"Doing CARE Week workshops was amazing because I think intersectionality is such an important topic that at times is not talked about enough. The Diversity Board did an amazing job creating it because there was a lot of important information, alongside helping put on events throughout the week. I think leading and learning more during Care Week has made me a much better ally," CARE leader and junior Caroline Crossland said.

While CARE Week occurred in November, other students spent their time throughout the year at monthly equity council meetings led by the Acalanes Diversity Board to voice their concerns during conversations with administration and students.

"Going to equity councils has been a very good experience. I have been able to listen to other students about important issues they are facing. I also think I have been educated about issues I didn't even know about and I think the equity council helps make students' voices be heard," junior Stella Bobrowsky said.

The AUHSD also holds a district-wide equity council meeting. Every month a different school site hosts different students leading it. Many equity leaders encouraged students to opt into these events.

"These events are really important to have people of color voices amplified in our district. Students who can come should come because it is important to work and really does allow for change to happen," Payne said.

Many different clubs and organizations on campus like Asian Student Union and Black Student Union also have monthly meetings in order to promote a more accepting environment.

"These equity clubs are so important because they are helping our campus through outreach and different events they put on," Chan said.

Students and administrators hope that equity leaders and events will change campus culture.

"I think overall the main goal is to have a safe and accepting environment for all students regardless of who they are," Payne said. "I think it is up to us and the school to help create those safe spaces for minority students, because otherwise who would do it?"

GPAC

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Many students support increased zoning for low-income housing units, but to some, the consequent increase of bulky complexes would upset the city's look and natural integrity.

"For the future of housing in Lafayette, apartments might be nice, but they shouldn't take up too much of the beautiful nature we have here," junior Cooper Womack said.

Like Womack, junior Sean McFarlane asserts that urban architecture would burst Lafayette's suburban bubble.

"This town could use more idiosyncratic architecture in some places, and the solution to that is not making a bunch of oversized garish eyesores," McFarlane said. "Smaller, more flawed, and characteristic architecture would be nice."

Students agreed that appropriate zoning is integral to the balance between urban and rural areas. GPAC may look to zone affordable multifamily housing near downtown and Bart to mitigate urban sprawl and traffic congestion while keeping residential areas to high-income, single-family homes. This way, urbanization would centralize near BART, where the city could zone multifamily housing as needed and comply with affordable housing demands. Meanwhile, the city could maintain the natural and traditional integrity of semi-rural residential neighborhoods.

McFarlane values the integrity of Lafayette's character but recognizes that the city must address the current imbalance of high-income to low-income housing allocations.

"There should be more options for low-income families," McFarlane said. "There is an argument to be made that this is both adhering to tradition and modernizing. Gentrification over time is a violation of tradition, but it also seems to be how cities and towns naturally progress when they flourish financially."

Over the next few years, GPAC will chart Lafayette's 20-year master plan piece by piece, nurturing a calculated evolution of the city. Environmental concerns, equity and inclusion, and state regulations, with the community at its core, will guide GPAC in the process to establish the future values and character of Lafayette.

"20 years from now I see Lafayette continuing to grow as a tight-knit community," junior Riley Daggs said. "But I also hope to see neighborhoods retain their unique characteristics."

Hybrid Learning

Continued from 4

started with my AP Bio Class and I have to say, I was a bit worried to realize how much less facetime I will have with my students and how much more time it's going to take to get where we need to be for the AP Exam in May," Acalanes Education Association President and science teacher Lori Tewksbury said during the March 8 Governing Board Meeting. "It made me realize that as we enter hybrid instruction, we really need to have our eyes wide open in terms of what we're hoping to gain and what our likely costs are going to be."

Additional problems for students with the new hybrid scheduling include difficulties with Academy periods allotted for different grade levels on specific days.

"...The most challenging part for me was figuring out the Academy [schedule]. This is because it was hard to figure out who had Academy for 9/10 [grade] Academy instead of 11/12 [grade]. My friends and I accidentally signed up for someone who didn't have an academy for underclassmen, and it was very stressful trying to find a place to go to for Academy," freshman Jenna Steele said.

Many Cohort C students felt like students in Cohort A or B received a higher quality of learning due to increased in-person interaction with their classmates and teachers.

"I think the in-person students do get more of a better and effective learning experience since they are physically at school while the Cohort C students are always at home. The in-person students can get face-to-face help directly from their teachers, while remote learners don't have that opportunity. Not everyone can get the help they need during this change. I do understand that it is not easy for teachers to teach the same lesson for remote and in-person students at the same time," sophomore Edison Singh said.

Even students in Cohort A and B observed that teachers gave most of their focus to the group of students in-person that day, telling the rest to leave the zoom or remain in breakout rooms.

"Well, [teachers] didn't really give us the lectures on the Zoom sometimes. When you're in-person, I noticed when you're not going into the breakout rooms, you get so much more than just the break-out rooms since [in the break-out rooms], it is you with someone else who might not even understand it. And also just the communication. [Teachers] talk to a certain group the entire time and rarely ever rotate," Gardner said.

While students appreciated the safety precautions, many felt additions such as the arrows proved to be more of a nuisance than anything else.

"The arrow system is the bane of my existence. It's very redundant and no one follows it because it could take you seven minutes just to move from one hallway to the other," Gardner said.

Other safety measures received a positive response from students, who felt that the smaller class sizes, hand sanitizer stations, and mandatory social distancing created a safe campus environment.

"I feel pretty safe. I think there are a lot fewer people in the classrooms than I was expecting. I have some classes where there are five [or] six students there and it feels very manageable to spread out. I think people have been, as far as I've seen, pretty good at staying far apart from each other and sanitizing whenever we walk into the classroom. It is never going to be a perfect situation, but I think we are handling it," Baginski said

Although it may be a limited form of social interaction, in-person learning provided the current class of seniors with the chance to see their peers one last time before graduation.

"Personally, I haven't cared about missing our senior events and all that. Those aren't that important to me. I think I can get that closure and get that feeling just among myself, among my friends, but it would have sucked if we had finished all online and we didn't get to see the rest of [the senior] class again. So, I've been very happy that I can just chat with people," Baginski said.

As students old and new fall back into the familiar rhythms of in-person learning, teachers and administration look ahead to a future where Acalanes staff and students may return to campus without Zoom, Cohorts, or socially distanced desks.

"We're hoping and I'm hoping that as 16 [year old teens] and over get vaccinated, then we can all be back in full instruction in the fall. That is our hope and that is our starting point," Glimme said.

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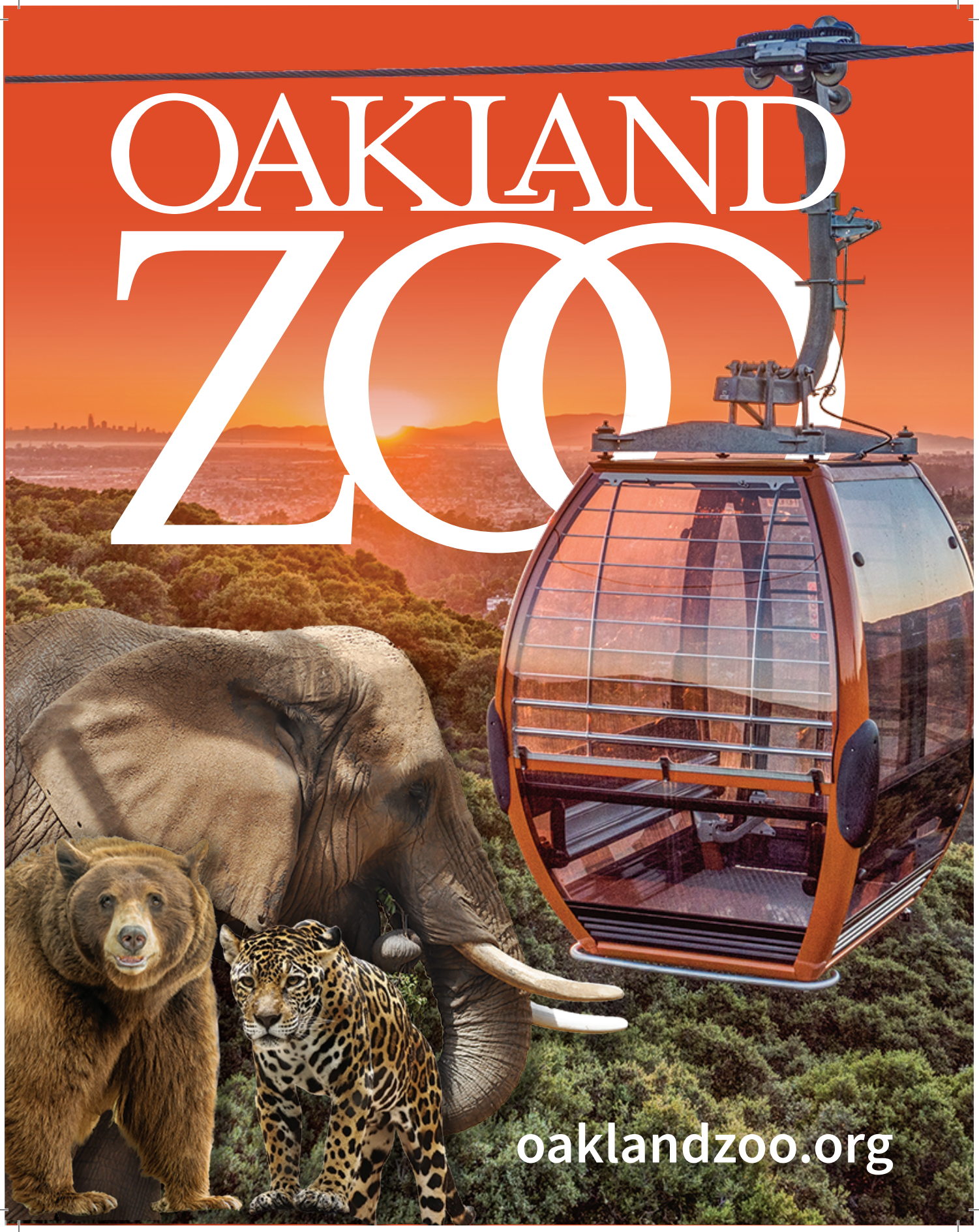
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The Misrepresentation of Whitewashing in Pop Culture

Acalanes community express its opinions on whitewashing in the media

Jacque Peacock, Haley Rurka and Juliet Becker | Staff Writers

At the 2020 Academy Awards, the Academy only nominated one person of color for their performance in 20 categories. Unfortunately, this lack of diversity is not rare in Hollywood; in 2015 and 2016, the Academy did not nominate a single person of color for their performance.

Hollywood's desire to increase profits leads to constant whitewashing and misrepresentation of POC in the media. The industry's racial insensitivity prompts activists to speak out.

White actors playing POC roles created a prevalent issue in Hollywood. Whitewashing not only contributes to the lack of POC representation in the media, but it also leads to blackface.

Like most racist traditions, blackface has a long and ugly history in Hollywood. For example, Judy Garland, Fred Estaire and other 1950s stars appeared in blackface while portraying POC characters. While the 1950s may be decades ago, modern-day actors participate in blackface too. Some include Ted Danson's "roast" of Whoopi Goldberg in 1993, where he appeared in makeup resembling minstrel performers, and Jimmy Fallon as a part of Chris Rock on "Saturday Night Live" in 2000.

Angelina Jolie's role in the 2007 film A Mighty Heart marks another recent example. Jolie, a white woman, plays Mariane Pearl, a woman of Afro-Cuban and Dutch descent. The makeup artists clearly darkened her originally pale skin and Jolie wears brown contact lenses and a curly dark-colored wig.

"I like the actress, but I do not support her role in the film. Not just because of her authenticity but when representation is so few and far between it shouldn't be handed to someone that doesn't truly portray the characters," sophomore Olivia Banks said.

Jolie's role demonstrates just one example of white actresses appearing in POC roles. While her appearance remains the same for the 2015 film Aloha, white actress Emma Stone plays a character of Asian and Native Hawaiian descent. Scarlett Johannson also faced criticism for her role as an Asian woman in Ghost in the Shell in 2017.

Hollywood's continued use of white actors in POC roles remains a mystery to the general public, leading students to construct their own theories.

"I think whitewashing is something that's used to make the normal audience feel comfortable in a way. When you're comfortable all the time, you're not going to change your beliefs, ways, or opinions," Latinos Unidos President and senior Zevin Acuña said.

Casting white actors in POC roles often leads to blackface and yellowface. However, this issue does not stand alone. Whitewashing also contributes to the erasure of POC actors in the media.

According to Dr. Nicki Lisa Cole's article "Does Hollywood Have a Diversity Problem?", across the top 100 movies from 2007 to 2014, white people make up 73.1 percent of speaking and named characters. Over 40 movies did not include a single speaking Asian character. Black character dialogue did not appear in 17 films, and only 17 films featured a minority lead or co-lead.

Blueprint Cartoon / Zoe Edelman

Netflix series Bridgerton sparked controversy among viewers regarding the cast. Because the show is based in 17th century England, many criticized the show's choice to cast POC in historically white roles.

However, many viewers support the decision to create a more diverse cast, regardless of historical accuracy.

"I'm sure it's riddled with historical inaccuracies that simply don't matter because it's entertainment. Watching something played by a variety of people who anyone can relate to does matter," Banks said.

As people become more aware of whitewashing in productions, many wonder why the media casts white actors as POC.

"It may be a result of white supremacy- this idea that as white people, we can somehow comprehend all experiences, and we are blind from even seeing our ignorance. A lack of even seeing that the white experience and perspective isn't universal, but rather, is limited and narrow," science teacher Jada Paniagua said.

Whitewashing happens off the screen as well, appearing in popular toys such as Barbie. The dolls fit the "ideal" body type and stereotypical characteristics of a European woman. Mattel sells over 58 million Barbie dolls each year. Many people believe that representation of light skin, blonde haired Barbie creates toxic beauty standards for children.

"I think Barbie definitely influenced my beauty standards as a kid and still influences kids today. Growing up, I was forced to play with the white barbies because there weren't any that looked similar to me at the time. For a while, I was convinced that pale skin, blonde hair and blue eyes were the acceptable standard," Black Students Union (BSU) president and senior Deja Cooper said.

Students in clubs like Black Students Union and Latinos Unidos discuss the culture of whitewashing and its effects on POC, focusing on its recurrence in the Lafayette community.

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"We frequently speak on whitewashing in our BSU meetings. It's such a constant topic given the fact that we attend a predominantly white school and that any activities surrounding race are typically whitewashed," Cooper said.

Whitewashing extends to little or no representation of POC in the media. This leads to misconceptions surrounding POC lifestyles and cultures.

"Like I've said before, the misinterpretation of POC in the industry is detrimental. People rarely get to see someone that looks like them on the big screen," Cooper said.

Additionally, whitewashing in the media notably affects POC students from an early age.

"Growing up biracial was isolating and that was only intensified by not being able to connect with those characters. An impact of this being a heightened appeal to all sorts of new childish television that have a fraction of the representation POC crave," Banks said.

Hollywood often categorizes minorities into disapproved activity. At the same time, the media praises white actors for acting similarly.

"Latinos are portrayed in a negative way a lot in pop culture, but then it's glorified at the same time. If you see a Latino person doing those things that Latino people stereotypically do, it's bad. But when you see a white person doing it in pop culture or something, then it's glorified and seen as a good thing," Acuña said.

In the pursuit of a solution to the media's whitewashing, allies to people of color play a key role. Willingness to hear the perspective of POC can lead to inclusivity in the industry.

"Personally, I make an effort to diversify my social media. I want to expose myself to the perspectives and ideas of BIPOC folks, and LGBTQ+ folks, because my own judgement on these ideas is so limited. I want to read and hear what they think," Paniagua said.

A conscious audience argues against Hollywood's use of whitewashing. The desire for Hollywood and casting agents to take accountability draws students to search for a solution to the problem.

"The media can be held accountable by hiring more actors of color. Of all colors. Most movies I see involving a woman of color, it's typically the same actress with lighter skin. Expanding their sights on dark skin actors would be a good way of holding the media accountable," Cooper said.

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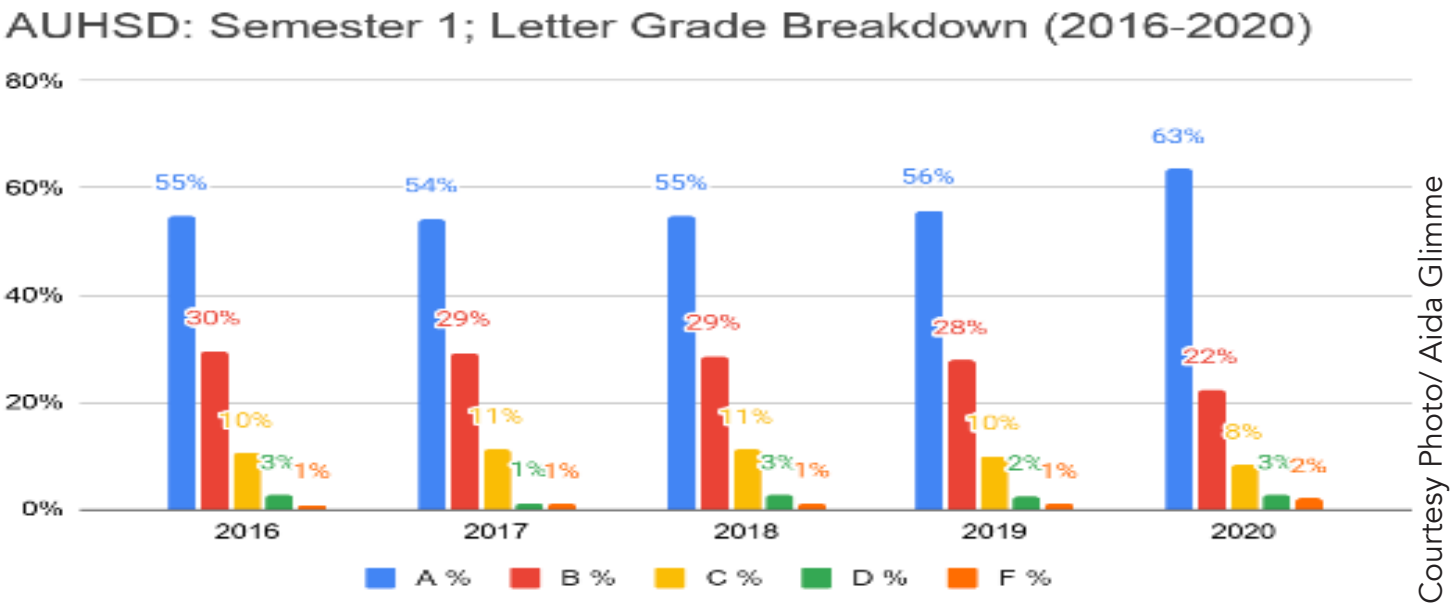
The Distance Learning Grade Gap

In contrast to schools across the state, Acalanes sees a jump in average grades.

Liam McGlynn, Mason Archer, Keith Johnson, and Connor Faust | News Editor, Sports Editor, Head Videographer, and Staff Writer



Courtesy Photo/ Aida Glimme

In March 2020, schools across the country shut down abruptly and shifted to distance learning. Since then, school districts have noticed the detriments of this transition on students' grades.

However, compared to other school districts in the country, Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) students have not experienced the same impacts on their grades.

On average, over the past four years, students' letter grades have remained consistent—with roughly 55 percent of students receiving an A only three percent receiving a failing grade.

During the 2020-2021 school year, however, the amount of A's given to students increased by eight percent while the amount of failing grades increased by a mere two percent.

Generally, students' grades increased this fall semester with the average GPA in the district rising from 3.30 in 2019 to this year's GPA of 3.37. While this change may seem slight, this increase is notable compared to previous years that the district's GPA has decreased since 2016.

Suggested causes for this spike include increased accommodations from teachers, student-based academic dishonesty, and the abbreviation of courses, specifically advanced placement and honors courses.

However, students who struggled in school before the pandemic felt the effects of the transition to district learning most strongly, creating a worrying notion for administrators.

"I was concerned," Associate Superintendent of Educational Services Aida Glimme said. "We were having a really much higher number of students getting D's and F's...it's really hard to make up for D and make up one F, but it's really hard to dig yourself out of a hole of three F's. So when we see a student with multiple, that's a big red flag for us."

Typically, only about 12 percent of students receive a D or an F each year. While distanced learning did not affect this statistic, the number of students receiving more than one D or F drastically increased this fall semester.

Of the students who received a D or an F in the first semester, 56 percent of those students received multiple D's or F's.

Among the various reasons that possibly caused the spike in students' grades, one potential explanation is academic dishonesty.

With distance learning, teachers struggle to hold students accountable for cheating on assignments and exams. On exams, this is primarily due to the teacher's lack of control of the students' testing environment. In response, teachers have found new ways to test students' knowledge without the potential for cheating.

"I have had to 'let it go' when it comes to cheating and trust that students will have integrity and pride in their own work and not cheat," math teacher Julee Henderson said. "Students sign the following honesty statement for each assessment: 'On my honor as a student I have neither given nor received aid on this test. I am using no other resources but my own notes, practice work, note cards or study guides… I will not discuss this exam with anyone else during or after the exam.'"

Nevertheless, cheating among students has continued since the beginning of the school year.

"Yes I 100 percent do think cheating has played a role in getting better grades," junior Michael Kuhner said. "I know a lot of people fall victim to parental pressure to get that A and to do that they might cheat on a test."

With the return to hybrid learning, cheating may decrease among

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students, which could potentially lead to a drop in Acalanes' average GPA.

Additionally, due to challenges brought on with distance learning, some teachers adapted their grading policies to further support students. These range from smaller homework loads to allowing students to take tests on their own time.

"I have been more lenient in my grading practices. There has been so much 'unknown' with grading that I have tended toward giving all students the 'benefit of doubt,'" Henderson said.

Teachers have taken on various levels of leniency during the quarantine period, with some teachers not changing their courses' difficulty at all. As a result, students find themselves with a wide variety of difficulties within their virtual classrooms.

"...my teachers have not been lenient at all.... But I know some friends who have teachers who are very chill and just give busy work," Kuhner said.

Some teachers have shortened units or removed material from their classes to prioritize the most integral parts of the course. With classes reduced from 90 to 75 minutes at the beginning of the school year, time limits force teachers to cut two hours of material from every month of school.

"Distance and Hybrid learning have required immense changes in my curriculum, so I have had to revise everything I used to do in each of my three subjects taught. We have had to reduce the content covered. The notes and/or the way I deliver lessons are drastically different. The assigned homework is less and of course different. Quizzes and tests had to be shortened and revised," Henderson said.

Despite this, course experiences differ among the student body. The varying experiences of students mainly depend on the teacher and the intensity of the class. While some teachers created lesson plans to better accommodate the difficulties of quarantine, others with more rigorous and larger class requirements and subjects often had to hold the classes to a high standard.

For example, AP teachers explain units in weeks in order to meet AP testing requirements. These changes have had a myriad of results, leaving many courses abbreviated compared to their normal counterparts.

While distance learning definitely changed classes and grades throughout the past year, hybrid learning offers a light at the end of the tunnel. As Acalanes begins to adjust to hybrid, many students continue to benefit from their education.

"Distance learning has had a negative impact on the majority of my students' learning experience. But despite this, most students are learning a great deal. They have hung in there despite the difficulties," Henderson said.

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Learning About What Our Textbooks Never Taught: Women's History

Celebrating Women's History Month by honoring the contributions of historically overshadowed women

Sabrina Agazzi, Julia Poole, Lyanne Wang, and Irene Meklin | Copy Editor, Online Feature Editor, Staff Writers

Nellie Bly, Dorothory Lawrence, Ella Fitzgerald… For decades, the names of these accomplished women were unknown in a world where sexism dampered their successes in nearly all corners of society. However, following a stretch of progressive feminist movements, 21st century America now embraces March as Women's History Month, spotlighting a time for people to recognize and learn the names of female figures who society failed to acknowledge in the past.

Beginning with the establishment of the first International Women's Day on March 19, 1911, U.S. Congress officially declared March National Women's History Month in 1987. The annual celebration honors the contributions of women to American history, culture, and society.

Since the 1900s, the K-12 curriculum of U.S. schools rarely included women's history. Although people have made great strides in gaining women's rights since then, many people note that American textbooks today still fail to fully represent women as a result of the male-dominated past.

"History textbooks reflect how history is told: by the victors. History is based on factual events, but it's interpreted and told from the perspective of those with social and political power… Who are the victors with social and political dominance? Men. Our textbooks definitely reflect that narrative," Acalanes history teacher Kristen Anderson said.

Several students also mention that an overwhelming number of subjects are oriented around men, which can lead to the common lack of knowledge on women's contributions.

"When I think of people who have played a prominent role in history, I can name a lot of men, and in specific fields too; scientists, politicians, artists. Until recently, history has been written by men about men, [and] our curriculum is focused on men's accomplishments," sophomore Sophie Westen said. "However, when I think of women who have had an impact, I can name very few. We learned so little about women and their contributions and it's time for this to change."

For young girls in school, not having the opportunity to learn about female figures sometimes promotes the belief that women are not meant to be as successful as men.

"Growing up as a girl and not learning about our history has been almost diminishing in a way… To try and explain it, it's made me feel as though I can't accomplish as much in life, or as though I'm not expected to or supposed to," sophomore Emma-Caroline Avery said.

Some people stress the importance of acknowledging influential female figures in American history to show how women contributed society just as much as men, especially in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which American textbooks often associate only with men.

"Women have always been a part of science but have not always been in the forefront. It is important to dig deep into history to show people, especially young girls, that women have played an important part in STEM fields," science teacher Daizy Asaravala said. "For me as a woman, seeing other women represented in a field that is interesting to me, like chemistry, gives me a sense of belonging and a sense that I, too, can make contributions and a difference in that field and in the world."

While the historical underrepresentation of women and the current-day sexism sometimes stir feelings of anger and disappointment within girls, students emphasize that celebrations like Women's History Month are not times to feel hatred towards men nor pity for past mistreatment; they are times to finally empower women to give hope for future generations.

"Although most of the male figures we learn about in school are important, I think learn[ing] about the important accomplishments of women in history as well would've given girls in our generation, and even generations before us, something to aspire to be or hope to accomplish in the future… My hopes moving forward is that women will one day soon be respected for everything they contribute to society," Avery said.

Several people reiterate that individuals must not restrict the attention that Women's History Month brings towards women's achievements to only one month. Instead, celebrating successful women of the past and present should be constant year-long.

"It's important to showcase the achievements of women in all fields, and celebrating Women's History Month is an ideal time, but it should not be confined to only one month… Let's talk about it all year," Asaravala said.

In celebration of Women's History Month, *Blueprint* contributes these profiles to recognize a few of America's countless female icons.

Ada Lovelace

Courtesy Photo / Science Museum Group

Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace (better known as Ada Lovelace) was born on Dec. 10, 1815 in London, England. She was the only daughter of poet Lord and Lady Byron. A month after her birth, Lovelace's father separated from her mother and left England soon after. He died in Greece when Lovelace was eight years old.

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During childhood, Lovelace's mother encouraged her to pursue mathematics. Lovelace was frequently ill as a child, which allowed her to dedicate time to her studies.

Later, Lovelace was known to socialize with many poets, mathematicians, and artists of her time. She befriended mathematician Charles Babbage who showed her his proposal for a proto-computer called the Analytical Engine.

Lovelace translated the works of an Italian mathematician on the Analytical Engine, attaching a section of notes to the translation. These notes were three times as long as the article itself and included a formula that the Analytical Engine could use to calculate a sequence of Bernoulli numbers.

Today, mathematicians widely consider this method of calculation to be one of the first computer programs, making Ada Lovelace history's first computer programmer.

She also dismissed the idea of artificial intelligence, believing that a machine would only ever be able to follow human orders. This idea has sparked a debate and several rebuttals, including one from famed mathematician Alan Turing.

Ada Lovelace died of cancer on Nov. 27, 1852, but numerous works of art, as well as a programming language named after her, will continue to commemorate Lovelace.

Nellie Bly

Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman, known by her pen name, Nellie Bly, was born on May 5, 1864 in Cochrans Mills, Pennsylvania. When Bly was six years old, her father died and her mother remarried shortly after. However, her mother's relationship resulted in divorce, which was a scandalous act in the late 19th century.

After her father's death and mother's divorce, Bly's family struggled financially. By 15, Bly's family could no longer pay for her education, causing her to drop out of school.

From her early struggles and forced independence, Bly blossomed into a progressive and outspoken teenager. After reading a Pittsburgh Dispatch newspaper that portrayed women in a sexist manner, 18-year-old Bly voiced her disgust in a letter to the paper's editor. Impressed by Bly's passion and intellect, the editor offered her a weekly column, which marks the beginning of her lifelong career as a journalist.

For one of her columns, Bly wrote about divorce under the pen name Nellie Bly.

Bly showed tremendous dedication in her investigative journalism. In 1886, she feigned

Courtesy Photo / Library of Congress

a mental illness to get an inside look at New York's mental institutions for her article "10 Days in a Mad House". This series of articles was an immediate success following their appearance in the New York World later that year.

Three years later, Bly's curiosity inspired her to travel. She entered a contest that challenged people to circle the globe in just 80 days. Bly achieved the goal in the world record of 72 days.

After nationwide recognition for her journalism, Bly took a break from writing and reporting in 1895. That same year she married millionaire Robert Seaman. He was 50 years her senior and the owner of successful steel and iron producing companies. He died in 1903 and Bly put her inherited fortune and progressive mindset towards reforming health care benefits and the working environment for the companies' employees.

In the last decade of her life, she moved to Europe where she resumed her journalism, this time for the New York Evening Journal. In her writing, Bly focused on two major movements of the time: the First World War and the Women's Suffrage Movement. She continued to document these events until her death in 1922.

Dorothy Lawrence

While many women heroically served during World War I (WWI) by volunteering for the Red Cross and tending to the wounded, one woman wanted to "see what an ordinary English girl without credentials or money, can accomplish…[as] a war-correspondent." In 1915, Dorothy Lawrence cycled to Creil, a French base camp, to report on WWI.

Lawrence was born on Oct. 4, 1896. At age 18, she traveled to the Creil base camp to document the indiscriminate damage from World War I. Denied access to the front, Lawrence disguised herself as a British private with help from other soldiers by forging a military pass and stealing a military uniform. During this time, Lawrence fulfilled the position of Sapper, a soldier who digs tunnels and works with explosive mines. After ten days, however, a soldier she entrusted with her secret exposed her identity. English Generals arrested and cross-examined Lawrence, as they believed she was a spy. After interrogating her, the army placed Lawrence in a convent as a prisoner of war.

Once the army released Lawrence to England, she decided to tell her life story. The army did not allow her to report on the war without censorship, however. When she published her autobiography Sapper Dorothy Lawrence, the Only English Woman Soldier in 1919, the War Office prevented its success through censuring.

Soon after, Lawrence made a claim to the police that her church guardian raped her. Declared insane, the police sent her to the Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum, where she died in 1964.

Although many silenced Dorothy Lawrence during her lifetime, her work became more popular following her death. Lawrence's story reveals her resilience, determination, and strong will. She made it to the front when no civilians could, and did not let her gender stop her from securing the truth.

Courtesy Photo / Getty Images

Ella Fitzgerald

Courtesy Photo/ William P. Gottlieb

Known as the "First Lady of Song" and "Lady Ella," Ella Fitzgerald was born on April 25, 1917, to William Fitzgerald and Temperance "Tempie" Williams Fitzgerald. Separating shortly after Ella's birth, her mother moved Ella to Yonkers, New York.

The family struggled financially, and Fitzgerald worked as a messenger "running numbers" and as a lookout for a brothel. After her mother's death in 1932, Fitzgerald moved in with her aunt. She began skipping school, and at the age of 17 she dropped out to achieve her dream of becoming an entertainer.

While living on the streets, Fitzgerald had no room for failure. She entered a contest at Harlem's Apollo Theater, where her performance of the Hoagy Carmichael tune "Judy" impressed the audience. After walking away with the contest's $25 first-place prize, Fitzgerald soon met bandleader and drummer Chick Webb, and joined his group as a singer. With Webb, Fitzgerald recorded "Love and Kisses" in 1935, 1938's "A-Tisket, A-Tasket", "I Found my Yellow Basket", and played regularly at one of Harlem's hottest clubs, the Savoy.

Fitzgerald led the band following Webb's death in 1939, and renamed it Ella Fitzgerald and Her Famous Orchestra. In the early 1940s, she launched her solo career and recorded hit songs with the Ink Spots and Louis Jordan. Her career took off when she started working with Norman Granz in 1946. Touring with Dizzy Gillespie and his band, Fitzgerald shaped her singing style by incorporating scat singing during her performances.

Fitzgerald's career skyrocketed in the 1950s and 1960s, as her unique ability to mimic instrumental sounds influenced her signature technique of improvised scatting. In 1956, she began recording for Verve, beginning with Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Song Book.

At the first Grammy Awards in 1958, Fitzgerald won two Grammys for best individual jazz performance and best female vocal performance, becoming the first African American woman to win a Grammy.

In 1960, Fitzgerald broke into the pop charts with her rendition of "Mack the Knife". Playing concerts well into the 1970s, Fitzgerald slowed down in the 1980s due to health problems. Suffering from diabetes, Fitzgerald became blind and had both legs amputated in 1994. She made her last recording in 1989 before her death on June 15, 1996, at her home in Beverly Hills.

In her lifetime, Fitzgerald recorded more than 200 albums and over 2,000 songs, winning 13 Grammy Awards, the NAACP Image Award for Lifetime Achievement, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She broke through numerous glass ceilings and helped clear the way for more women, particularly those of color, in the music industry

Jane Fonda

Courtesy Photo / Dutch National Archives

Jane Seymour Fonda was born on Dec. 21, 1937 in New York City to Canadian-born socialite Frances Ford Brokaw and actor Henry Fonda. Growing up in the midst of World War II, her father was often cold and distant, and her mother committed suicide when Jane was 12 years old. She developed an eating disorder following her mother's death and struggled with it for several years.

After briefly attending Vassar College in New York, Fonda traveled to Paris to study art. In 1954, she decided to follow her father's footsteps and co-starred with her father in a production of The Country Girl. Fonda's career took off in 1960, with her film debut in Tall Story followed by her Broadway performance in There Was a Little Girl. In 1962, she starred in the romantic comedy The Chapman Report, as well as Broadway performances in Invitation to a March and The Fun Couple.

Starring in 1964's Circle of Love, Fonda became one of the first American actresses to have a semi-clothed scene in a foreign film. After her sexualized role in 1968's Barbarella, Fonda turned to more serious parts. She scored her first Academy Award nomination for her performance in 1969's They Shoot Horses, Don't They?, and won her first Academy Award for Klute.

Although she continued to excel in performances like Julia (1977) and received her second Academy Award win with Coming Home (1978), Fonda turned to activism in the 1960s and 1970s. Fonda adamantly supported the Black Panthers and hosted fundraisers in her home to support their cause. Fonda also befriended civil rights activist Angela Davis, and visited Davis in prison in 1971 to discuss how to end racial oppression in the United States.

From 1969 to 1971, Fonda also supported Native Americans at Fort Lawton by protesting the U.S. government for breaking treaties.

Fonda also supported the anti-Vietnam War movement. She traveled to the U.S. and Canada denouncing the Vietnam War, and in 1972, she traveled to North Vietnam to speak about the U.S.'s motives and consequences for participating in the war. Americans severely criticized Fonda, giving her the nickname "Hanoi Jane" and writing her off as a traitor for her support of the North Vietnamese.

A vocal ally for LGBTQ+ rights and feminism, Fonda continued to demonstrate her cinematic prowess with Nine to Five (1980), On Golden Pond (1982), The Butler (2013) and Grace and Frankie (2015). At 83, Jane Fonda continues to shape her legacy with the recent Cecil B. DeMille Award and her environmental activism that resulted in her arrest five times over four months during 2019. Using her platform for all activist fronts, Fonda is both a cinematic and activist legend.

Marsha P. Johnson

Courtesy Photo / The Brooklyn Museum

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Marsha P. Johnson was an African American transgender woman, a social activist, and a drag queen. She was born on Aug. 24, 1945 in New Jersey under the name Malcolm Michaels Jr. and was the fifth of seven children. At the age of five, Johnson engaged in cross-dressing, but her father reprimanded her for wearing traditionally feminine clothing.

After graduating from Thomas A. Edison High School in 1963, Johnson was homeless and turned to prostitution to support herself. However, she soon found joy being a drag queen in Christopher Street, the hub of the New York City's Gay Community in the 1960s, and quickly became a prominent figure in the 1969 Queer Revolution. During this time, Johnson switched between the names Malcolm and Black Marsha until settling on Marsha P. Johnson, making flippant remarks that the "P" stood for "Pay It No Mind".

Johnson often helped others in the LGBTQ+ community by aiding the homeless and LGBTQ+ youth while touring the world as a successful drag queen. In 1969, the New York Police Department (NYPD) targeted LGBTQ+ people on several accounts, sparking the Stonewall riots in which the LGBTQ+ community formed a series of spontaneous demonstrations, fueling the first wave of the Gay Pride Movement. Several eyewitnesses identified Johnson as one of the main instigators of the riots, prompting her title as the vanguard of America's gay liberation movement.

Despite her contributions to the Stonewall riots, the public often overlooked Johnson's accomplishments due to the broader LGBTQ+ movement's focus on white cisgender people rather than transgender men and women of color. Still, Johnson pushed in other areas of activism and co-founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) with her friend Sylvia Rivera that provided services to homeless LGBTQ+ people in New York City, Chicago, California, and England.

Today, the Marsha P. Johnson Institute (MPJI) is an institution that defends the human rights of Black transgender people. Johnson's story is also featured in the films Pay it No Mind: Marsha P. Johnson (2012) and The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson (2017). Along with MPJI, these documentaries preserve Johnson's legacy as a Stonewall instigator, a "drag mother", and a revolutionary trans activist.

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Climate Change Discussion Heats Up with Texas Snowstorms

Heavy Snowstorms in Warmer U.S. States Reinforces a Future of Further Climate and Energy Disasters

Julia Poole, Marisa Guerra Echeverria, Juliet Becker, and Izzy Smith |Online Feature Editor and Staff Writers

Freezing and exploding pipes unequipped for extreme cold. Hundreds hurrying into supermarkets for dwindling supplies as government leaders flee. The freezing cold spared no energy or heating supply in an unprecedented winter storm in one of the hottest states in the U.S., foreshadowing future weather disasters for America.

Texas' heavy snowstorm and subsequent energy crisis in Feb. sparked both a local and national discussion regarding the counterintuitive effects of climate change and current energy sources.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), "the Arctic polar vortex is a band of strong westerly winds that forms in the stratosphere between about ten and 30 miles above the North Pole every winter. The winds enclose a large pool of extremely cold air. The stronger the winds, the more the air inside is isolated from warmer latitudes, and the colder it gets." Occasionally, strong atmospheric waves in the troposphere break upward into the stratosphere, knocking the polar vortex off kilter. While wind patterns cause changes in the polar vortex, extreme weather events, such as the freezing air outbreaks in the mid-latitudes of the U.S., will increase as global warming worsens.

As the polar vortex swept through the Eastern and Midwest regions of the U.S., most states prepared for the freezing temperatures, icy winds, and piles of snow. In Texas, however, the storm left over four million households without power, heat or water supplies.

In response to the widespread panic and questions regarding the source of the outages, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott blamed renewable energy and the Green New Deal for Texas' problems on Hannity Feb. 16.

"This shows how the Green New Deal would be a deadly deal for the United States of America. Our wind and our solar got shut down, and they were collectively more than ten percent of our power grid. And that thrust Texas into a situation where it was lacking power on a statewide basis. It just shows that fossil fuel is necessary," Abbot said in the interview.

According to Acalanes' AP Environmental Science teacher Jada Paniagua, similar statements from politicians exaggerate the renewable sources' effect on the outages.

"Power plants in Texas for the most part caused the outages. The thermal power plants, [which are] powered by fossil fuels or nuclear, also failed. The power grid failure in Texas was not a result of the failure of renewable energy- it was the result of the failure to prepare for unprecedented cold weather," Paniagua said.

Abbott received widespread criticism for his comments, including from many Acalanes students.

"Texas officials are pointing blame at the wrong cause just because they personally failed the state. I believe the renewables are not the culprit and that Texas is blaming them with no logical reasoning or cause," senior Charlotte Fellner said.

Another polarizing political figure present in the climate discussion is Texas Sen. Ted Cruz. While hundreds of Texans endured the storm's brutal conditions, Sen. Cruz escaped to Mexico with his family on Wednesday, Feb. 17. Some note the irony in Cruz's denial of global warming amidst his flee from an event that will likely increase as climate change worsens.

"According to the satellite data, there has been no significant global warming for the past 18 years," Sen. Cruz said in a 2015 interview with the National Public Radio (NPR). "The global warming alarmists don't like these data. They are inconvenient to their narrative. But facts and evidence matters. And I would note that many in the media reflexively take the side of the global warming alarmists."

Cruz's opposing stance on climate change and escape from the situation in Texas ulti-

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Blueprint Cartoon/ Freschtta Warres

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mately postponed government aid to those stricken by the storm: Texas inhabitants. With no access to water and electricity, millions of Texans suffered in the harsh storm and over 50 Texans died from hypothermia, according to the Texas Tribune.

Such a disaster affected Texans not just in their fear of the storm, but also in their trust in local politicians. Between Sen. Cruz's trip to Mexico and Gov. Abbott's lack of response, many Americans believed that Texan politicians did not care about the storm or climate change.

Other states also face extreme climate conditions, including California with worsening wildfires that sweep through the state every year. During Aug. and Sept. 2020 alone, wildfires burned 3.9 million acres across the state.

The drifting smoke caused individuals within the Bay Area and Acalanes community to face toxic air and apocalyptic skies, as the air quality reached a dangerous level of about 238.

Though most states, like California, are adapting to cleaner methods to help eliminate climate change, there is still a widespread use of fossil fuels, which contributes to the increasing emission of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

However, some areas continue to contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, including transportation.

"But there are still really big "problem" areas. Transportation is a big challenge, as is energy storage," said Paniagua.

Transportation is one of the biggest producers of greenhouse gases, coming in at 41 percent of the emissions out of all of the energy needs of California, such as electricity, industrial, and residential.

Due to the inescapability of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, many experts despair on the future of the global climate.

"With the way greenhouse gases are increasing, in my mind, there's no doubt that we're causing this. It's human activity that's causing this. So, I'm concerned about the future," John Lindsay, a marine meteorologist with Pacific Gas and Electric, said.

This concern from experts mirrors the concern of those who had to suffer through these climate disasters. During the Texas crisis, the Texan government showed irrefutable negligence, as millions of Texans faced the extreme conditions.

"I personally lost power for 3 days...Because of the extreme drain on the Texas utilities, we did as many things as we could to alleviate that strain: no laundry, keeping the heater as low as possible, using very little water, keeping lights off… Due to the hazardous conditions, we were unable to receive any deliveries, unable to travel safely, and many stores shut down and eventually ran out of food or had no way to process payments due to their refrigeration systems, water systems, and other vital systems failing," Texas resident Christian Flores said.

After facing these hardships with little government aid, these Texans believe the state government should establish more safety measures to prepare for future climate emergencies.

"The state was completely ineffective at handling the crisis, to the point that a state of emergency was declared by the President for less than one week of weather that other states handle for six or more months out of the year," Flores said. "I strongly think that [Texas'] vital systems should be safeguarded and upgraded and [that] more backups put in place to prevent [us from] being caught without other options again [in another climate event]."'

Local climate activists at Acalanes agree that the state and federal governments should institute more environmentally-conscious shield states from extreme weather disasters.

"I hope there are policies put in place to hold major corporations accountable for their environmental impact, as well as more renewable energy sources that are widely available. I also hope that they will give more aid and resources to those affected by extreme disasters," Climate Alliance Club President and sophomore Amelia Morgan said.

If the government fails to institute these eco-friendly changes, climate and energy connoisseurs warn of a dreary future ahead.

"I go back and forth between optimism and pessimism. The next few years will show us much more what the future global energy path will likely be. If we do not begin to make big changes in the next few years, I think it is likely that our energy future will be much more difficult, with significant global conflict over access to the remaining fossil fuels," Paniagua said.

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The Forever-Burning Light in Asian Americans

Bringing light to the existence of anti-Asian racism in America's past and present

Lizzy Xie, Stella Heo, and Lyanne Wang | Managing Editor, Online Editor-in-Chief, and Staff Writer

Hundreds of lanterns float into the sky, creating a warm glow in the dark night. As the participants watch the lanterns rise, they let go of their past troubles and hope for a better year. This year, as violence against Asian Americans continues to plague the country, lanterns no longer symbolize only hope, prosperity, cleansing, but also protection against hatred and xenophobia.

Following the emergence of COVID-19 in late 2019, anti-Asian violence swept across the U.S. and provoked countless verbal and physical attacks on innocent Asian Americans. The organization Stop Asian American and Pacific Islanders (APPI) Hate reported on March 16, 2021, that 3,795 hate crimes against AAPI occurred since the beginning of the pandemic, spiking 149 percent between 2019 and 2020.

Asian Americans During COVID-19

The Rise of Asian Harassment

As the pandemic's conditions worsened in the spring of 2020, COVID-19 restrictions increased and scapegoating soon followed. Because the first discovery of COVID-19 was in Wuhan, China, many people directed their frustration at the Asian community for the current state of the pandemic.

However, even prior to the virus's spread to the U.S., some Acalanes students recognized the dangerous racial effects COVID-19 may come to pose. Two Acalanes alumni, Abey and Sabrina Lin, produced a short film called "Catching Love" in February 2020 to emphasize that people must not blame Asian Americans for the virus.

"COVID-19 was coming up overseas and it hadn't really become like a serious issue in the U.S. yet, but overseas, we were already seeing xenophobic attacks," Sabrina Lin said. "The seeds were starting to show up, and we just wanted to hopefully stunt that in a way as much as we could as artists, using whatever voice that we have in our expression."

March 2020 brought with it a new wave of anti-Asian sentiment which can be associated with former President Donald Trump called the virus the "Kung Flu" and the "China Plague", suggesting that Chinese Americans were the ones to blame.

"I think Trump has a huge general impact on his followers, so him declaring that the virus comes from Chinese people [makes] not only himself racist, but he incited anti-Asian racism in a lot of people who might not have been racist against Asians before he used those phrases to refer to the virus," junior Autumn Long said.

As many grew to associate Asians with COVID-19, Asian businesses all across the country lost customers who feared they would get the virus. However, the rise in Asian discrimination has not affected many Asian business owners in Lafayette.

"Our restaurant [has] not been affected by the current wave of anti-Asian discrimination. I think the main reason is that Lafayette is a very nice community and most of our customers are from Lamorinda. Most of them are so sweet and nice people," Poke Go owner Suki Lin said.

Some Asian business owners believe that if they were in other communities, there would be more discrimination against their businesses.

"I don't think [Uncle Yu's has] been super affected by the anti-Asian discrimination, but I think that's because of the areas that we're in, being that our restaurants are in Lafayette and Pleasanton, they're very nice areas. So I think that if we were in a different area, like a bigger city, it might have a bigger impact," Uncle Yu's business owner's daughter Nicole

Oesterholm said.

After seeing the support towards Black business owners during the recent surge in the Black Lives Matter movement, several Asian owners wondered if they would receive the same advocation.

"When the Black Lives Matter wave happened, I was a little jealous. I thought, will this happen to the Asian community? Will people protest for Asians? When all the people in the USA asked to support Black-owned businesses, will people support Asian-owned businesses [the same way], especially affected so much by COVID-19? Some people just think Chinese or Asian people bring the COVID-19 to the US," Suki Lin said.

Many people also tie Trump's rhetoric to the increase in verbal and physical attacks on Asian Americans. The New York Police Department revealed data showing that anti-Asian hate crimes in New York City jumped by 1900 percent in 2020, with only one reported incident during all of 2019 compared to 20 in the first half of 2020.

"Trump's fear-mongering language has normalized hate against Asian-Americans. His rhetoric was a major cause of these recent attacks. Out of fear of the virus, people look for someone to blame: Asians. Hearing the words 'Chinese Plague' directly contributes to the scapegoat mentality," junior Sally Sheehan said.

Anti-Asian violence only increased as the pandemic progressed. Stop AAPI Hate released a report on March 16 revealing that roughly 503 anti-Asian hate incidents took place in the U.S. in 2021 alone. These attacks were not solely against Chinese Americans, however. Members from other Asian countries, such as Vietnam and Thailand, encountered similar aggressions.

"Many Americans cannot distinguish between different ethnicities of Asians, so when one Asian group is said to be to blame, all types of Asians get the attacks," Long said.

Within just the first two months of 2021, a 64-year-old Vietnamese American woman was assaulted in broad daylight, an 84-year-old Thai American man named Vicha Ratanpakdee was killed in an unprovoked attack in San Francisco, and a 61-year-old Filipino American named Noel Quintana was slashed in the face while riding a subway. These attacks were only three out of hundreds.

"The attacks on elderly Asian people give me a gut-wrenching feeling. Not only have the assaults been horrible acts of racism, but those people are also elders that might not be as strong as they used to be… It greatly saddens me that people have so much hatred against a certain race that they would violently attack innocent elderly people on the street," Long said.

The rise in harassment towards Asian elders caused some Asian Acalanes students to fear for the safety of their grandparents.

"I feel scared, especially since a lot of the people being attacked are elderly people, especially since my grandparents lived here for a while. It's kind of scary to think that [the] elderly people who [you] care about a lot [could get hurt,] and you don't want anything bad to happen to them," sophomore Mary Laska said.

Oftentimes, this fear extended to students' worry over whether they themselves will encounter similar experiences.

"I was very sad, angry mostly, not surprised but a little afraid [because of the attacks]. Although I know that most of the attacks are on older types of people, it still is making me think a lot about where it is safe to go and where it is not safe to go," senior Kylie Alfaro said.

Some parents felt it is necessary to warn their children about the possible dangers they may face for being Asian during the pandemic.

"Around the time with the elections and right at the beginning of the pandemic, my dad did mention 'be careful when you go outside,' which is never something a parent wants to tell their kid. You didn't do anything wrong, but just watch your back and act as appropriately as possible to not infuriate anyone further than looking Asian," sophomore Jou Yoshida said.

Although there have not been any reported attacks in Lamorinda, discrimination towards Asian Americans is not an issue that is far away. Out of the 1,226 anti-Asian hate incidents that occurred in California since the pandemic began, 292 were in San Francisco, which is more than any other Bay Area city.

"I've seen some of the videos of people harassing Asians for absolutely no reason, and it's difficult to see and makes me feel disheartened and sad that we live in a society where this still happens often. Living in Lamorinda, I don't really feel scared that I'm going to be attacked for my race, but I think if I lived in an area where this happens a lot, I would definitely be scared for my life," senior Megan Go said.

Responses to the Attacks

In response to the rise in Asian harassment, many students use social media to show their support for the Asian community.

"I'm not Asian American and I don't want to take away from their voice, but I have posted things on my Instagram story and also have had conversations about this with others. My goal is to be an ally but I'm also trying to be respectful of my place," junior Caroline Crossland said.

For some Asian students, their peers speaking up on social media is comforting.

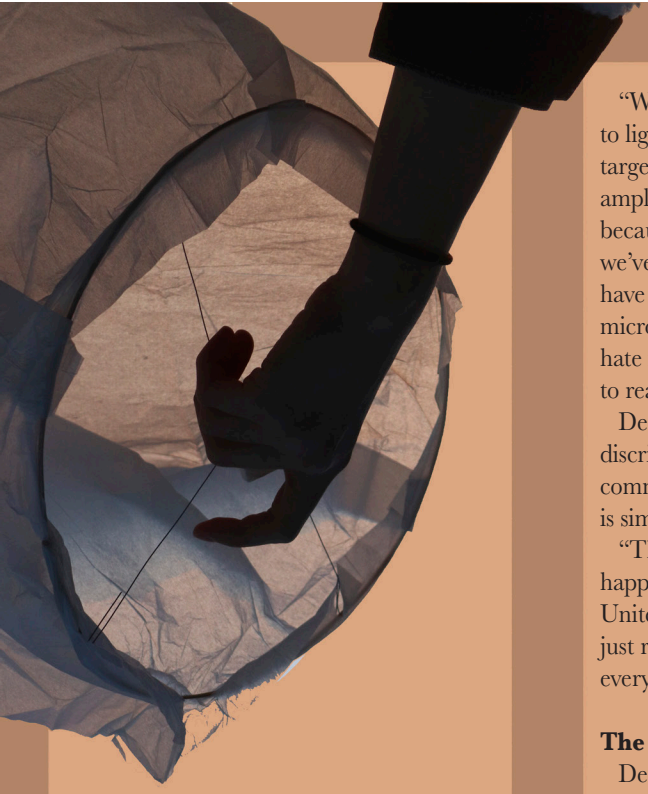
"I am so thankful that people are standing up against Asian hate on social media. It feels like people are finally listening to the Asian community," Sheehan said.

However, other students wish that people would focus more on taking physical action rather than only showing support online.

"I really appreciate the effort, but what I would rather have people do is actually speak out against things when they see them. It's so easy to just repost and tell people you're not racist, but to actually do something about it is a completely different matter that I feel like we need to grab hold of more," sophomore Kylie Choi said.

While social media activism does express solidarity towards Asian Americans, several people emphasize that posting online without actualizing one's words achieves very little in combating anti-Asian sentiments.

"I feel like now for some reason, activism has become a trend on social media and it's not negative because you're obviously spreading the word about something, but I feel like a lot of people don't really keep



going with actually doing anything. It's just kind of words on their story that disappear in a day and then you forget about it and that's kind of it," Laska said.

Furthermore, some students suspect that posting about anti-Asian incidents has become performative activism.

"Suddenly [anti-Asian attacks] that have been going on for months now becomes trendy, and then that's when people start talking about it," Yoshida said. "But at the same time, I think a big problem we have nowadays is that no one can do anything, and I'm sure that people who are posting about it are trying to help."

While the pandemic limited individuals' abilities to physically protest against anti-Asian racism, people are making efforts to combat the issue in other ways. For example, the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) showed support for Asian American students at its schools by planning for spaces where they could share personal experiences with racism.

"I think the first step is to do this affinity space where students feel comfortable, they're with other Asian students, they can really share that common experience and name it. We're going to do that before Spring Break, for sure," Associate Superintendent Amy McNamara said. "And then what can we do in the action space [is] kind of involving probably allies, students who aren't Asian but are participating in equity work around those larger conversations."

The District also plans to take further steps to highlight Asian voices to teach about and deconstruct the detrimental effects of preconceived biases.

"We have to start. We need to bring this to light in a way that's very explicit and targeted… Certainly, this is a time for us to amplify their voices and make them heard, because as we know from all the lessons we've done this year, you have a bias or you have a prejudice, and that can lead to those microaggressions, which leads to acts of hate if you go up that ladder, and we need to really talk about it," McNamara said.

Despite its burning presence today, discrimination against the Asian American community is nothing new. The pandemic is simply highlighting the depth of its issues.

"There's a lot of change that needs to happen. There's a lot of division in the United States. I feel like [COVID-19 is] just revealing how change needs to happen everywhere," Laska said.

The History of Anti-Asian Sentiment

Despite the recent surge, anti-Asian sentiment began centuries ago. White-only immigration policies and the term "yellow peril" are two of many anti-Asian sentiments embedded in America's history of systemic racism which considered Asian Americans too unclean for citizenship in America.

"The United States is a very Euro-centric country in its origins… Even before the Chinese had come over, there were laws against their settling here. They did allow immigration with regards to labor, but once the job was completed, they were excluded," University of California, Berkeley Lecturer Harvey Dong said to Blueprint.

Following China's Opium Wars and crop failures in the mid-nineteenth century, upwards of 20,000 Chinese immigrants came to California in search of job opportunities. However, Americans on the West Coast soon ascribed declining wages to these Chinese workers and impelled Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The act placed a ten-year moratorium on all Chinese immigration and was the first U.S. law to forbid immigration due to a person's race.

In 1892, The Geary Act extended the Chinese Exclusion Act for another ten years, and in 1902, the Federal Government made Chinese immigration permanently illegal. Such policies highlighted the American public's perception of Asian Americans as foreign.

"These laws reflected the attitude towards Asian immigration… There was discrimination against the Chinese in America, and I think that has to do with the fact that Chinese Americans, no matter how many generations, are not really viewed fully as Americans but they're viewed as perpetual foreigners," Dong said.

America's deep-rooted anti-Asian sentiments also trace back to the Japanese internment camps of World War II. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942, which allowed the U.S. government to relocate Japanese descendants to isolation camps.

In carrying out this order, the U.S. government forced Japanese Americans who were at least one-sixteenth Japanese to dispose of their belongings and to move to the internment camps within six days.

"One hundred and ten thousand Japanese were removed from their homes on the West Coast, which included the Bay Area, and they were put into temporary detention centers and later to concentration camps in the inner areas away from the West Coast because they were deemed as an enemy or potential enemy force against the United States," Dong said.

Although Japanese internment camps closed by March 1946 and President Gerald Ford repealed Executive Order 9066 in 1976, the camps left lasting effects on the Japanese population and fostered a general hostility towards Asian Americans.

"There were stories of orphanages where children were sent to the concentration camps, so [there's] lots of trauma related to that for future generations," Dong said.

The Model Minority Myth

Despite a history of discrimination, many people recognize Asian Americans as a "model minority": a label that comes with its own fraught history of prejudice.

The term "model minority" first appeared in 1966 in the New York Times article "Success story: Japanese American style", where sociologist William Peterson claimed that the success of Japanese Americans stems from their strong values of hard work. American media outlets then pushed this narrative that all Asian Americans were intrinsically successful to appease growing movements against racial inequality occurring at the time.

Today, a model minority refers to any minority group in the U.S. that achieves privileged socioeconomic positions in contrast to other minority groups. However, most people still associate this stereotype with Asian Americans due to the media's depiction and praise for their apparent success in academic, economic, and cultural domains. The model minority's ties to the Asian American community contribute to false generalizations, such as the idea that

all Asians must be smart, hard-working, and obedient.

For some students, these stereotypes set unrealistic expectations and undermine personal successes by accrediting one's accomplishments to their being Asian.

"I definitely have felt trapped by the model minority stereotype. I feel like I have this weight on top of me pressuring me to succeed. If I don't do well in school, then I am not a 'good Asian.' If I do perform well, then it is just because I am Asian," Sheehan said. "I can't fail without being ridiculed or succeed without people attributing my accomplishments to my ethnicity."

The constant pressure to succeed academically can often affect students' mental health.

"The model minority is negative because it forces many Asian Americans to conform to it, and it can overall severely damage their self-worth and mental health. For example, maybe a Chinese American child is a prodigy at visual art, but for their entire life, they have had to live with the stereotype that 'all Asians are smart' and that they must do extremely well in school so that when they might not excel in, say, math, they see it as a great failure," Long said.

However real its impacts are, the model minority idea itself is still only a myth. It is an unsubstantiated trope that aims to dismiss claims of white privilege and institutional racism by theorizing that if Asian Americans can flourish, so can other minority groups. In 2017, the National Bureau of Economic Research released a working paper that dismissed this idea by suggesting that the Asian American community's upward mobility was a result of the nineteenth-century immigration policies which favored and attracted highly educated Asians to the U.S.

"Asians typically are deemed successful in life whether it's academically or job-wise, which the majority can point to as evidence that they haven't discriminated against the particular minority," senior Megan Go said. "However, this reasoning is flawed because many people don't achieve 'success' and struggle as a result of discrimination. The majority is essentially trying to showcase the few individuals who were able to overcome the obstacles and succeed per se."

The belief that all Asian Americans are naturally successful sets the narrative that the Asian community is an exception from other minority groups, which results in the trivialization of the racism they face on a day-to-day basis. Several students feel that a core issue surrounding anti-Asian racism is how normalized it has become.

"[Stereotypes] come into play with academics, driving, being able to see, etc... People often mock Asians' dialects, which is normalized, and... racism is also seen in situations where people assume you are related to another Asian purely based on appearance," Go said. "Finally, normalized racism is seen through how people react when Asians try to speak out. People often say, 'it was just a joke', or deny they said something racist which just goes to show that racism against Asians is a normalized part of society to the point that people don't realize they are being racist."

Furthermore, the model minority trope contributes to a downplay of racism towards all people of color.

"Separating minority groups and then saying one is better because they're more productive to society [is] degrading and also generalizing. It glosses over a lot of harmful things [that happen to the Asian community] and racism that still happen to other groups as well," Laska said.

Creating divisions among minority groups drives a wedge between different disadvantaged communities.

"It pits minority groups against one another [and] perpetuates the belief that you are not 'worthy' as a minority if you are not acting like the model person," Sheehan said.

Ultimately, highlighting Asian American success stories creates a misleading image that contradicts the actual conditions of the Asian American community. In 2016, the New York Times reported that Asian Americans had the largest income gap of any racial group, with the top 10th percentile earning 10.7 times more than the bottom 10th percentile. Still, the media's focus on only the top 10th percentile shadowed the gravity of such major disparities.

"[The model minority] hides real problems within the Asian American community because not all Asian American communities are well off. There's poverty within the Asian American community and Asian Americans who live in on a day-to-day existence… Not all Asian Americans are what we would call the crazy rich Asians that you see in the movies," Dong said.

From the institutional racism deep within America's political history to the stereotypes that follow the model minority myth today, the presence of anti-Asian racism is one that seeps all throughout the nation. The racially-motivated attacks in the past year only uncovered this long-standing antipathy towards Asian Americans and shined light on the need to presently take action against anti-Asian hate. Some people emphasize that the first step in doing so is to educate oneself on the topic of discrimination against Asians.

"[We must] be educated on what's going on both with people who are in our community and people outside the community. There's a responsibility to know about what's going on and to not just look at the violence, but to maybe [also] google Asian American history to learn a little bit more," Acalanes Wellness Coordinator Allen Choi said.

Students reiterate that after learning about xenophobia, one must go further in taking measures against it in-person.

"People need to learn to become aware of normalized racism towards Asians in their daily lives if they see it or experience it and call it out. It is normalized and many don't realize what they are doing is wrong, [so] it is important to let them know and also lead by example… I think this is lacking in our society," Go said.

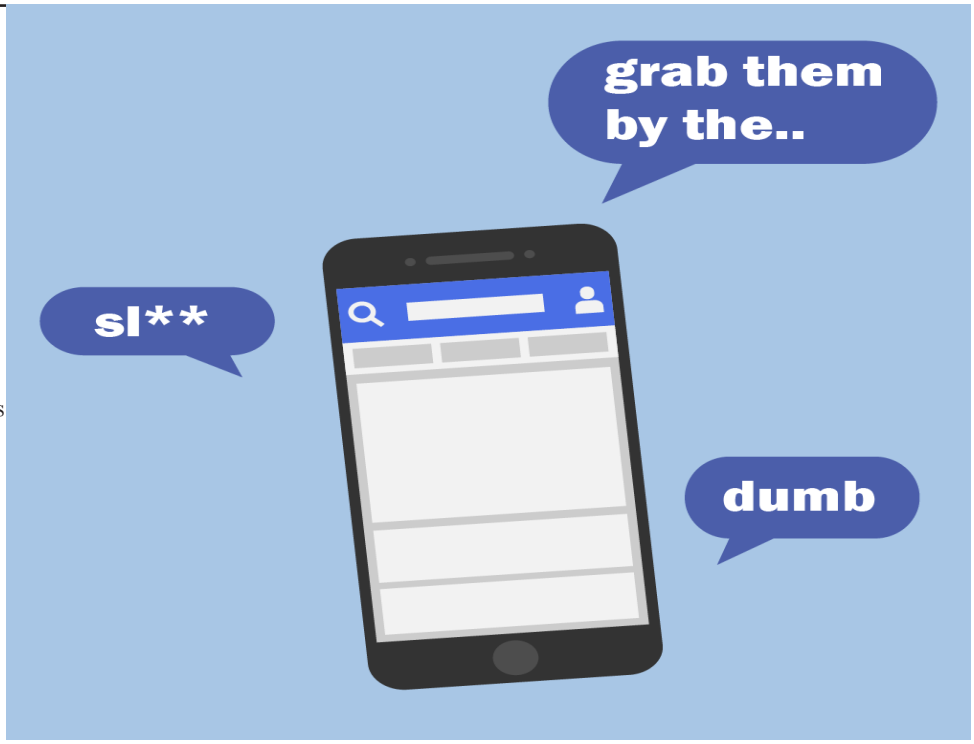
With more education and action, the Asian American community is hopeful for a future generation that will shine together.

"I think as you learn more... you'll get a little bit more outraged, but then as you learn more [and go] beyond what's been taken away and maybe learn about the culture outside of food.… maybe you'll have those conversations. I think that there'll be a new era of connections to people," Allen Choi said.

Misogyny in the Media: The Treatment of Women in Music and Television

Analyzing the deep-rooted double standards in pop culture

Juliana Upp, Nastia Grits, and Juliet Becker | Staff Writers



Blueprint Graphic/Freshctta Warres

The fight against sexism began centuries ago, yet women still struggle for equality in most elements of society. The patriarchy impacts a woman in almost every facet of her life, including the pop culture she enjoys. As a result of this inequality, feminist movements continuously battle the ingrained prejudices of modern media.

Harmful double standards plague society and often take shape in the film and music industry's treatment and portrayal of women.

Misogyny is an ingrained or conscious prejudice against women. Although misogyny is not always deliberate, people often ignore or overlook it. This allows harmful displays of misogyny to remain prevalent within several areas of the media.

Britney Spears is an example of this bias against women. Spears was an icon of the 2000s, known for her catchy music and charming demeanor. Later, the public knew her for her mental breakdown and struggles in rehab.

In early Feb. of 2021, The New York Times released episode one of "Framing Britney Spears," which illustrates Spears' time in the spotlight. The documentary recounts how the paparazzi drove her to insanity by sexualizing her as a teen girl and often asking intrusive and inappropriate questions.

The release of the documentary sparked interesting conversation regarding her treatment.

"I've learned more about [Spears] recently … What sticks out to me most is interview clips I've seen, or drama news clips about her. People were really interested in her body and dating life and other really personal things. I think she was way too young to experience something like that," said freshman Maddy Beeman.

Misogyny can also refer to the idea that women are inherently sexual beings and should be viewed as such. Some students noticed that reporters do not speak to men in the same way and believe that Spears' mistreatment was a result of misogynistic journalists and commentators.

"If Britney were a man she would not have been treated this way," sophomore Daphne Wandell said, "I think that now, people are starting to sympathize with Britney more, but at the time people just made fun of her."

While Spears may be a leading example in how misogyny affects those in the music industry, misogyny is equally as established in film and television.

In the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Scarlett Johansson played the superhero Black Widow. The movies portrayed the character as seductive through flirtation with male heroes and provocative clothing.

"Someone sat down and genuinely decided to write [Black Widow's character] ... She's hyper-sexualized. She's such a confident character but she's rarely treated as such," said senior Megan Baginski.

Unfortunately, this over-sexualization of women is common in the media. Instagram influencer Tessel Ten Zweege aims to spread awareness about female issues through journalism.

"Women are heavily sexualized in the media. It's a bad stereotype [and] it's dangerous because if you keep portraying a certain group of people as objects and as only good for sex, then people are not going to humanize them," said Zweege.

Many people acknowledged the way movies and television portray women and took steps to change this. Movie remakes featuring all female casts establish female representation in roles traditionally played by male actors. Often, though, men assume roles as directors.

"It makes the whole exchange far more performative. The idea of female remakes is 'let's get more representation. Let's redo this piece of media in a way that recognizes the agency and personhood of women more completely,' but then you pass those projects off to male directors who don't have the perspective and the life experience to really fill that out," said Baginski.

In addition to movies, misogyny dominates the music industry. Time and time again, male rappers create vulgar music about the female body.

"Misogyny in music is super centered on stereotypes and men get to be like 'that's artistic freedom,' and it is, but we also have to talk about the underlying structures. A lot of these men actually believe the things that they rap and the things that they say," said Zweege.

In Aug. 2020, female rappers Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion released their song "WAP" in which they sing in great detail about owning their bodies as women. Members of the general public found the song inappropriate and foul for its graphic depictions of female anatomy, which contrasts the reaction a male rapper may receive for the same type of music.

"Any man can own his sexuality and display it in rap songs without a blink of an eye, but when a woman is in control of her sexuality it's a scandal … The way someone displays their sexuality does not discount their right to

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Recipe of the Issue: Lemon Bars

Jamie Lattin | Print Editor in Chief

Blueprint Photo/Jamie Lattin

With spring comes sunshine, and with sunshine comes every single person you know with a citrus tree dropping off bags of lemons at your door because they have too many to count. Once you've used them to make enough lemonade to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool and preserved so many in mason jars that you've run out of shelf space in your doomsday shelter, try your hand at some lemon bars.

Ingredients:

Dough
10 tbsp unsalted butter
1/2 cup white sugar
1 egg yolk
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp kosher salt

Filling:

1 large lemon (cleaned and halved)
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
3/4 cup sugar
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 tbsp unsalted butter (melted
2 eggs

Directions:

Prep: Thinly slice the lemon halves and place in a bowl. Remove the seeds, then stir in the sugar and lemon juice. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Dough: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Beat the butter with the sugar and egg yolk until smooth. Gently incorporate the flour, salt, and baking powder. Beat on low for about two minutes, then knead at most three times to bring the dough together. Grease a 9-inch metal baking pan and gently pat about 75 percent of the dough into it, covering the entire bottom of the pan in an even layer. Prepare a lattice with the remaining dough and carefully place onto a plate. Refrigerate the dough for about ten minutes.

Filling: Beat the flour, butter and eggs until the mixture is smooth, then thoroughly fold in the prepared sugar and lemon mixture from the previous day. Add the filling evenly on top of the dough in the pan and transfer the lattice on top. Place the pan in the lower portion of the oven and bake for 40 minutes, or until the lattice is golden brown. Let cool completely, then cut and serve.

Music: Movies, Misrepresentation, and the Marginalization of Disabled Communities

Examining the flaws and effects of the media's portrayal of autism

Lyanne Wang and Irene Meklin | Staff Writers

Man, I could play that role so much better than them! the viewer thought to themselves. The wave of annoyance one feels when seeing an actor butcher a role resemblant to oneself is utter and irrepressible. Yet, for those in the autistic community, this feeling is nothing new; non-autistic actors continually take on the roles of autistic characters throughout the annals of the film industry.

Singer-songwriter Sia Furler released her film Music on Feb. 10, sparking Twitter feuds and controversies over its antiquated display of autism. Sia's decision to cast a neurotypical, a label referring to non-autistic peoples, as a non-verbal autistic girl garnered much attention, thus opening a discussion surrounding the overall marginalization of the autistic community.

Music centers around a recovering addict named Zu who became the sole guardian of her half-sister Music, a young girl with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), following the death of their grandmother. Shortly after the film's debut, critics took to Twitter to accuse Sia of promoting ableism, which is the discrimination against people with disabilities. Much of the criticism stems from the fact that neurotypical actress Maddie Ziegler plays the lead role Music instead of an actual autistic person.

In responding to such accusations, Sia quickly defended her work through a series of Tweets where she claimed that she researched the topic of autism for three years and consulted several people on the spectrum throughout the directing process.

"I actually tried working with a beautiful young girl non-verbal on the spectrum and she found it unpleasant and stressful. So that's why I cast Maddie… I have my own unique view of the [autistic] community, and felt it is underrepresented and compelled to make [Music]," Sia said.

Despite Sia's aim to clear her intentions, a handful of Twitter users remained outraged that she insisted she was right rather than taking the opportunity to learn firsthand from those with ASD. Some students agree that Music reflects the insufficient efforts the general public puts into learning more about autism from autistic people.

"When people like Sia 'research for years' to learn about this subject, and still get it wrong, it clearly shows the minimal effort put in to learn more [about ASD]," sophomore Chloe Quintella said. "[It shows] the lack of motivation to perhaps reach out to a variety of autistic people to learn about their disability, what it's like being in their shoes, and how having a disability isn't a bad thing and they wouldn't be who they are today if they weren't autistic."

Several allies of the autistic community recapitulate how the inauthentic casting contributed to the misrepresentation of ASD.

"I have many friends who are autistic and as soon as they found out [about Music], they messaged me saying how they felt they weren't being represented in this movie because of how Sia casted it," sophomore Emma-Caroline Avery said. "I agree with them as Sia could have casted an autistic person to play this role and given them the representation they deserve, but instead, she had someone act as though they were autistic and over-exaggerated many of the characteristics of a non-verbal autistic person."

Although the issue of misrepresentative casting took the spotlight, Music also received criticism on several other fronts. For one, the film included multiple scenes with flashing lights and quick cuts, both of which have the potential to cause sensory overload in autistic people. A few critics further accused the film of portraying blackface by pointing out that Ziegler, a white actress, appeared to have a tan that was several shades darker than her natural skin tone.

Some people added that having neurotypical actors pretend to be autistic by replicating and oftentimes over-exaggerating behaviors associated with autism promotes harmful stereotypes that mock people with ASD.

"One thing that promotes the stereotypes [surrounding autism] is...people turning to TV shows or movies to understand what autistic people are like. Most of those shows such as the Good Doctor or the Big Bang Theory cast autistic characters within non-autistic actors," Quintella said. "So, in reality, when these roles are being played out, it can kind of be seen as a mockery to autistic people who would clearly play an autistic character better than someone who isn't autistic."

While Music recently renewed attention on the misrepresentation of autism, it is only one example in the film industry's long string of missing efforts to accurately portray autistic people's experiences. One example of the media's narrow approach towards depicting autism is its focus on only one social group: white cisgender men.

"So much of the representation in the media of autistic people is a white cis man. In fact, this is one of the biggest problems when it comes to diagnosis [of ASD]. It is so much more difficult for people of color or who are assigned female at birth to get diagnosed because most of…[ASD's] symptoms were based on white cis men," senior Eli Hamalian said. "So, what's happened is the media has created this narrative that seems to be representation, but in reality it doesn't reflect what most autistic people's experience."

Along with these fragmentary depictions, movies and films sometimes propagate the idea that all autistic people must be savants and show brilliance in some limited field.

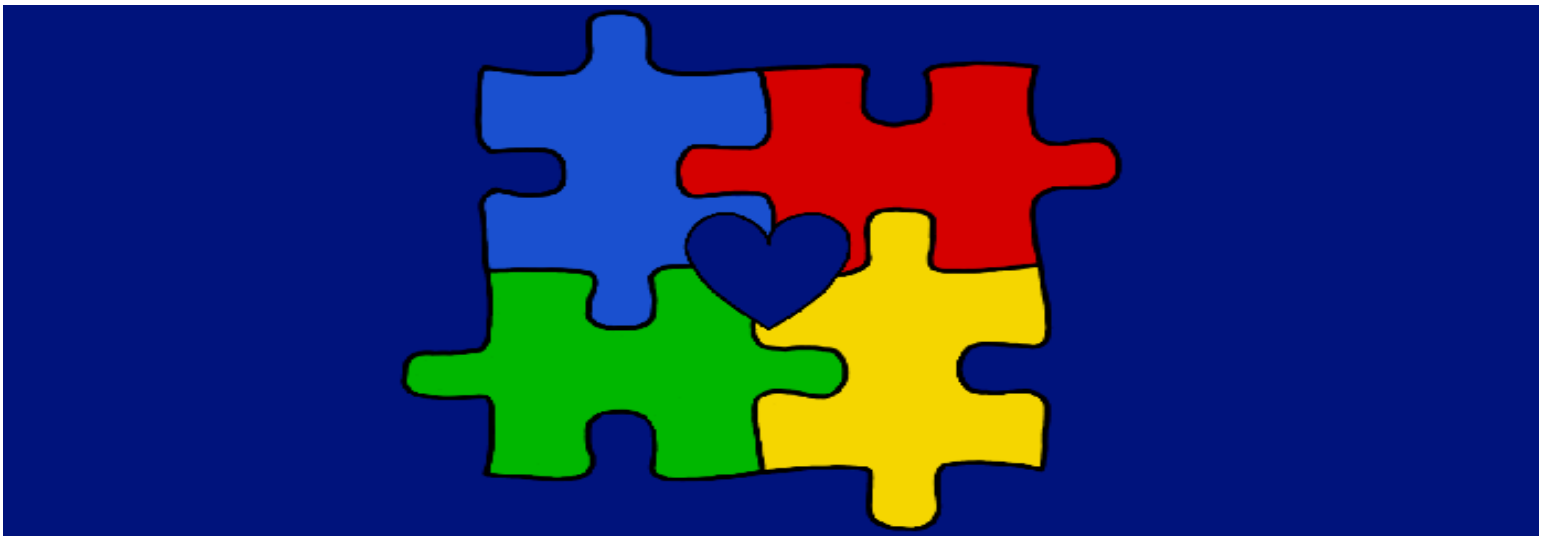
"People used to always associate autism with Rain Man, which then meant that people assumed all people with autism are savants. [However], it's hard to accurately portray any disability [or] diagnosis on film because film isn't reality," Acalanes psychologist Emily Reichard said.

Stereotypes such as this one create rigid outlines as to how autistic people must look or act in order to fit in with societal expectations and standards of 'normalcy'.

"We hear all the time about this autistic guy who can take one look at a city skyline and copy it by memory. But, most autistic people won't or can't do that, and elevating disabled people who are able to be these incredibly impressive things only encourages this narrative that equates the value of a disabled person to their ability to fit in or contribute to society," Hamalian said.

Movies' incomplete portrayals of ASD along with their lack of authentic autistic voices further promote false narratives around autism. Some common misconceptions are that autistic people must be high or low functioning, that they must look or 'seem' autistic to have ASD, and that they cannot form 'normal' relationships.

"The media typically portrays [autistic people] all as either high-functioning or low-functioning, they never show any in between… I feel that the media shows only one version of people with autism and makes people expect every autistic person to act that way," Avery said. "The way the media and movies typically portray autistic people make them all be put in this box of what society begins to think all autistic people are. It forces people with autism to feel as though that portrayal of them is what defines them... but that is just not the case."



Blueprint Graphic/Sabrina Agazzi

Students stress that these common stereotypes are untrue and are only the effects of the public's insufficient understanding of autism.

"The grouping of high and low function[ing] is completely wrong because there are frequent changes that happen in an autistic person's life that may affect how they feel or work in the moment… Autistic people are their own individuals, and it's definitely incorrect to assume or try to place them into groups by comparison of how they act or what they do," Quintella said.

Despite its inaccuracy, the media's portrayal of autism sets extremely high or low expectations for people on the spectrum, establishing limits on what the public believes autistic people have the potential for in life.

"The effect of this misrepresentation of autism in movies is misinformation… [Uneducated people] may think that autistic people are not capable of being in the [film] work environment, or maybe even any work environment, when in reality, they are actually capable of this," Quintella said. "Movies portray the stereotypical autistic actions and mockery that tightens the window for an educational moment in a film and displays something false."

Members of the autistic community stress that although the media constructed limiting beliefs surrounding ASD, it does not mean autistic people are in any way inferior to neurotypicals.

"I think there's a lot of dehumanization when it comes to autistic people… But in reality, most autistic folks are motivated by very similar sentiments to neurotypicals. Just because our way of operating and perceiving and reacting to the world is different from neurotypicals doesn't mean we're less than," Hamalian said.

ASD is a developmental condition that may alter people's way of viewing the world by affecting aspects of social, behavioral, and communicative development. However, ASD is a spectrum disorder which means that there is a wide variation in the type and severity of symptoms people experience. Due to the spectrum's broad range, it is difficult to create an exact picture of what ASD should or should not look like.

"Autism is a neurological condition, and doesn't specifically fit into one or two categories. It isn't a determinant of character or their path in life. It is simply that their brain is wired in a way a non-autistic person's isn't," Quintella said.

Today, the marginalization of autistic people extends to numerous aspects of society; it often occurs as restricted opportunities in education and employment. According to a 2015 study done at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, two-thirds of young people with autism had neither a job nor educational plans during their first two years out of high school.

"The social marginalization of the autistic community is a huge social disadvantage unjustly served to those who are not perceived as normal... It can also be noted that equal opportunities in all workplaces are not as easily accessed or modified to those who are autistic," Quintella said.

While these social disadvantages are rooted in a long history of ableism, several students feel that with better representation of autism in the media, stereotypes surrounding ASD will begin to dismantle. However, moving beyond the just first step of having autistic people play autistic roles in films, some people recognize it is just as important to have autistic voices behind the scenes.

"I think obviously autistic people should be telling autistic stories… Honestly [though], I think it's more important for autistic people to be a part of the crew and production team, rather than the cast. It doesn't really make sense to try and tell a story without consulting those who have actually experienced it," Hamalian said.

Students can also help elevate the voices of autistic people by making the effort to listen directly from individuals on the spectrum.

"One way students can actively work to dissolve these stereotypes is to not only research and look things up online, but reach to out to programs or [autistic] individuals to learn from their experiences and to put yourself in a position to ask questions and learn more engagingly about the autistic community," Quintella said.

Ultimately, students hope to make clear that having autism is not an awful thing nor is it a marvelous thing; it is simply a different way of experiencing the world.

"What I wish people could know is that having a disability isn't a bad thing… Yes, autistic people may 'struggle,' but overall, they are individuals with personality, passions, and characteristics similar to those of any other person," Quintella said.

Charcuterie Boards: TikTok Trends Turned Tasty

The Acalanes community uses local grocers to assemble snack assortments

Haley Rurka and Jacque Peacock | Staff Writers

Some friends hike up a grassy hill and lay a blanket out for a lunch picnic. Upon sitting, one friend reveals a charcuterie board wrapped in foil. Underneath the cover lies brie, grapes, salami, and other harmonious-tasting snacks.

Since COVID-19's quarantine guidelines enabled students and teachers to have plenty of time in the kitchen, charcuterie boards became a trendy snack for those in isolation. Despite the appetizer's recent rise in popularity, its timeline dates back to the 15th century.

The word "charcuterie" describes 15th century shops in France that carried pork products. Historically, the boards included little variety and focused mainly on an assortment of meats and cheeses. Modern charcuterie boards include an assortment of appetizers such as crackers, nuts, dips, and fruit.

"My favorite charcuterie food would be green grapes or any fruit. I also like to have crackers to add some salt to my board" said junior Elise Flagg.

Recently, boards became popular on social media platforms such as TikTok and Pinterest. Adults and teenagers alike adopted the creation of charcuterie boards as an engaging and rewarding activity during the shelter in place order.

"The first one I made was in September. My friend Liv and I saw a really great one on Pinterest and that's what we got inspiration from. It was centered on cheese and crackers with some fruit," said sophomore Elsa Simas.

Catering companies found that charcuterie boards presented solutions to procedures no longer allowed after restrictive COVID-19 orders. The contents of a charcuterie board do not require on-site chefs and are prepared following social distance guidelines.

"They present really well and the quality is still there. It's something that we feel comfortable shipping off to somebody or to a party and knowing that it's going to be good hours later. With having to keep distance and everything like that it's been a really easy thing to put on the menu" Van Noy Catering owner and executive chef Joe Van Noy said.

Generic assortments of cheeses and crackers undoubtedly attracted the public's attention. However, charcuterie enthusiasts began to expand past typical board contents. Today, one can find unique and customized charcuterie combinations in many places.

Caterers also offer personalized charcuterie boards that customers can individually arrange.

"We get creative with it, depending on what job it is. It's really what the client wants. The possibilities are somewhat endless" Van Noy said.

Acalanes students enjoy personalizing their charcuterie boards as well.

"I like that everyone can have something they like on it. It allows for a variety of options and lets you try new things" Flagg said.

While some dabbled in constructing charcuterie boards, others embraced it as a full-time hobby. Many turned simple snacking boards into artwork. Some boards include a vast selection of meats and cheeses meticulously placed to create an aesthetically pleasing array of snacks.

"Again, my friend Liv and I just decided to fill the board up as much as we could. It turned out really well. We added lots of different assortments of foods, and it looked very bountiful and fun" said Simas.

While charcuterie content options may seem endless, students unexpectedly found difficulty in creating their boards. Finding the balance between compatible snacks and an artful display challenged board creators.

"The hardest part of making it was deciding what we wanted on it. There were so many options and ideas and we didn't know what we even wanted on our board" said Flagg.

Students' trials led to new favorite snacks and unique combinations. As they searched for specific ingredients and products, people found that local grocers carry a considerable amount of charcuterie board items.

"My favorite place to buy items for a charcuterie board is Trader Joe's because it's really affordable and they have some great supplies" Simas said.

Along with purchasing preferred items, one should know how to arrange their foods in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

"A big part of it is definitely presentation," Van Noy said.

Assembling a charcuterie board might seem daunting at first, but an easy start arises in looking for inspiration on websites like Pinterest.

"Research it a little bit. Look online and search for what you like and what you don't like. There's just so much inspiration out there on the internet and all sorts of websites. So just see what you like, copy some of it and then get creative with it" said Van Noy.

Students found their groove in board making by mimicking arrangements they saw online. Then, many experimented with ideas of their own.

"Try a lot of new things and bring your friends to do it with you" Flagg said. "It's a really fun afternoon plan for your weekends!"

Blueprint Graphic/ Emma Uffelman

Digital Clothing: Fashion's Next Calling

Fashion goes digital in a new and sustainable way

Aysha Craig, Helen O'Neal, and August Walker | Copy Editor and Staff Writers

An influencer's closet is a revolving door of new and fashionable garments, constantly adjusting to match ever-changing fads. Recently however, a new trend entered the chaotic industry.

In the past two years, the fashion companies began introducing a fresh, more sustainable market. Shoppers can now purchase and wear clothing by uploading a picture and editing the garment on. This intangible clothing brings entirely new components to both the fashion industry and visual-based online media.

"We've never had 'Hey, take a picture of your friend and then photoshop a shirt on them'" Acalanes digital design teacher Chris Busse said.

While some shoppers find ways to ethically keep up with trends by utilizing second-hand stores and websites. Unfortunately, the public majority turn to fast fashion for short-term fashion solutions.

Companies that mass produce cheap clothing take advantage of resources that allow them to do so, such as fossil fuels and cheap labor from children and undocumented immigrants. Poorly made garments contain plastic traces of polyester which comes from petroleum, a fossil fuel. However, petroleum is a limited resource.

"Petroleum is running out. We have enough petroleum on our planet to maybe get us to the year 2050 which is, what, 30 years away?" AP Environmental Science teacher Jada Paniagua said.

To combat this, fashion corporations adopted the method of editing garments onto models.

According to DressX, a digital fashion company, the production of a digital clothing item will produce 97% less carbon dioxide than a physical one. Further, swapping one physical garment for a digital one will save, on average, 3,300 liters of water (DressX). Although public figures receive unique items to promote from partnerships and sponsors, they rarely weigh in sustainability. Influencers discard one-time outfits which, after one picture or YouTube video, often become unnecessary waste.

For influencers who use clothing for their career and content, digital fashion allows for a perfect opportunity to cut down their carbon emissions.

"I think [influencers] are the only people who have the money and need for a shirt only wearable in pictures. Personally, digital fashion isn't something I would take part in but it seems really cool for other people who want to be less wasteful but still need a lot of clothes" said sophomore Charlotte McKenzie.

Once more influencers begin to ethically promote digital clothing techniques, the fashion industry might expand this method, and simultaneously cater to larger groups of people.

"It's very interesting to see what's going to be the next trend, what it's going to look like ten years from now when you start manipulating your photos to the extent that it's not even real. You're wearing something completely different, your skin tone is completely different, I'm very curious to see what the world of fashion will be like with digital trends in the next five years" said Busse.

Fast fashion companies follow current trends in order to create products that fit a mold. Despite its positive attributes, the mass production of clothing contributes to unsustainable and unethical consumerism.

Digital fashion poses both a solution and a threat to companies that rely on Earth's supply of fossil fuels. This holds exceptional importance because of earth's finite resources.

"When we take things and use them once and throw them away forever, it doesn't take a lot of thought to realize, 'how could we do that on this limited planet?'" Paniagua said. "We can't just take things and then throw them away and be done with them. What we're going to do is run out of stuff to make things and overfill our planet with garbage."

Digital fashion is a cleaner alternative to poorly sourced polyester clothing. With enough time, it is possible for digital fashion to replace wasteful elements of the fashion industry.

"I think this will be big. I can't wait to see how digital fashion will change social media and the fashion industry" said McKenzie.

Blueprint Graphic/Mara Korzeniowska

Quote of The Issue

"What a lot we lost when we stopped writing letters. You can't reread a phone call"
- Liz Carpenter

Kayli Harley | Online Editor-in-Chief

Communication is easier today than it has ever been before. We simply tap a few phone keys and instantly connect with people across the room, or across the world.

So, why is it that a majority of us feel alone when we have everyone at our fingertips?

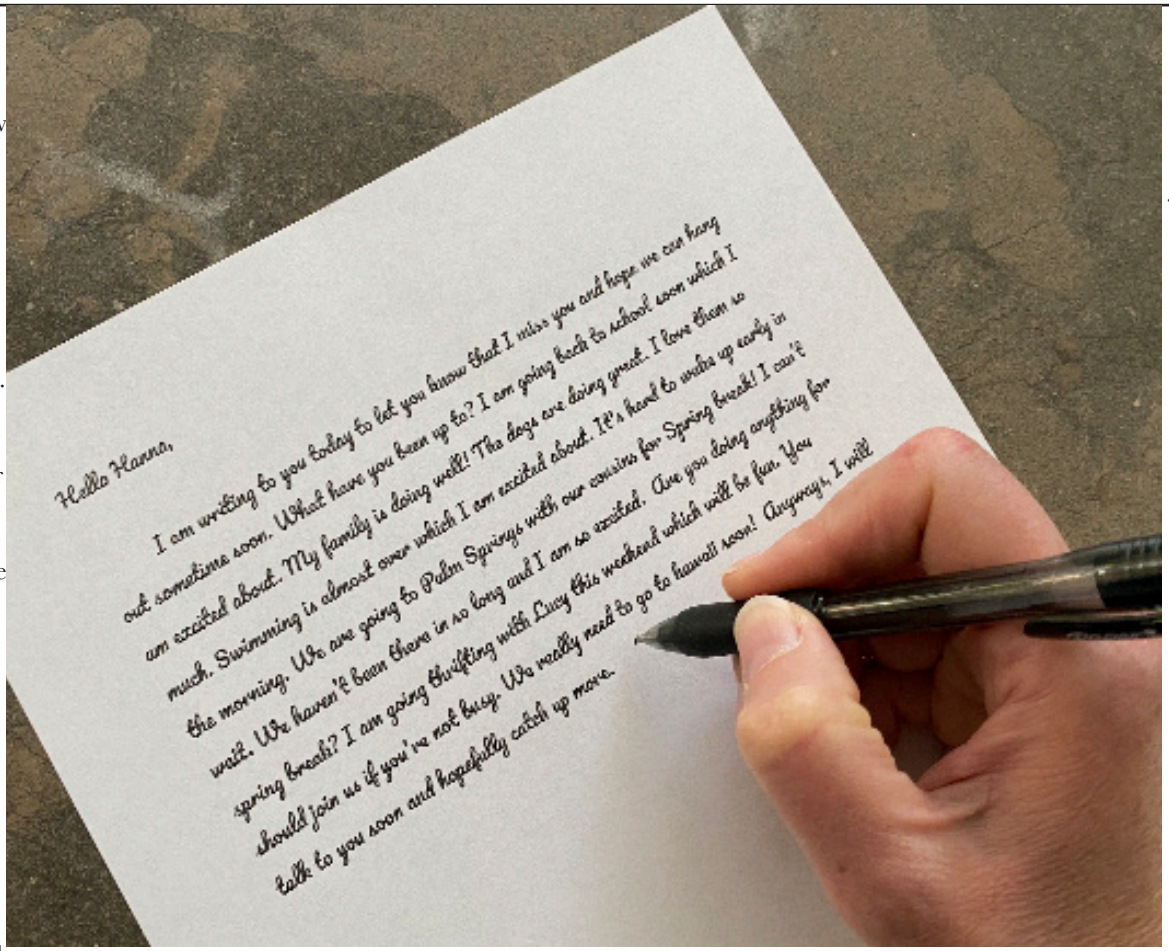
The issue is that ease often diminishes meaning. A loving text from a friend will appear the same as an autogenerated message from a data provider; the content is different, but the delivery is the same.

Writing someone a letter adds personality and tangible emotion to your words. From the way your handwriting can change with your feelings, to the paper you scribble the words on, the message in a letter is more personal.

Regardless of the medium, however, communicating with the people in our lives is vital during times of separation. Whether you text them or write them, offer them your time, attention, and appreciation. The only way to emerge from the isolation is to reach out.

How To Make Letter Chains, But With Ella!

Ella Alpert | Arts and Liaison Editor


Hello Hanna,
I am writing to you today to let you know that I miss you and hope we can hang out sometime soon. What have you been up to? I am going back to school soon which I am excited about. My family is doing well! The dogs are doing great. I love them so much. Swimming is almost over which I am excited about. It's hard to wake up early in the morning. We are going to Palm Springs with our cousins for Spring break! I can't wait. We haven't been there in so long and I am so excited. Are you doing anything for spring break? I am going thrifting with Lucy this weekend which will be fun. You should join us if you're not busy. We really need to go to Hawaii soon! Anyways, I will talk to you soon and hopefully catch up more.

Blueprint Graphic/Emma Uffelman

Hello all! With great sorrow I see that this issue lacks the reassuring words of Lizzy Xie in her "Snacks with Xie" column. However, I decided that because of this deficit, I would fill in to write a warm and fuzzy sentiment.

Covid is hard. Like, for real... this is tough stuff. Whether many of you readers hear this affirmation daily (or don't hear it enough), I wanted to share something that helped me to connect with friends amidst the disconnect of quarantine.

A couple of months ago I received a letter from my grandmother. Immediately, it felt strange. I mean she knows how to use a phone, she's not THAT old. Plus, a text would have taken her two seconds while letters employ time and brainpower.

However, after reading her kind words on paper, I realized she chose to exert the effort on purpose. Virtually, you can't visualize the work that goes into typing a message. My grandmother chose to write a letter because she wanted me to feel her thoughtfulness rather than assume it.

Additionally, her letter included an empty envelope and a stamp. She instructed me to pass on the exciting experience of receiving something personal to someone else.

What would it take to do this you might ask? Write another letter!

So if you, like many of us at home, feel isolated, I encourage you to start a letter chain of your own.

To do this, you can send someone you love a letter, and just like my grandmother, include an empty envelope and stamp. The next step is easy, just watch where the chain goes!

From Stage to Screen: Shakespeare Moves Online

Dramadons prepare for virtual spring play

Courtesy Graphic/Acalanes Dramadons

Jacque Peacock and Juliana Upp | Staff Writers

Performing a play while following COVID-19 guidelines remains nearly impossible for schools across the nation. In response to these pandemic restrictions, the Acalanes theatre program arranged a spring show like no other.

The Dramadons began preparations for a special online performance of Shakespeare's A Midsummer's Night Dream and Macbeth. But this is no ordinary production, the dramadons will perform using the virtual unified space method.

The San Francisco Shakespeare Festival created the virtual unified space method by employing a technology team that superimposes remote actors together. This creates a live performance while socially distanced.

Following Winter Break, Meehan assigned roles to the actors of both Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Before the break, however, stagecraft students had a head start to begin work.

"It's a pretty ambitious project, and we've been working on it since a little bit before Winter break because that's when we dreamed up the project … by the time we came back, we were cast and ready to roll" Meehan said.

Once Meehan locked in the casts for both plays, Advanced Drama began rehearsals. Directors play a key role in these meetings, as they guide and help the actors in piecing together the script.

"My job as of now has been to help my actors understand the Shakespeare text, and then understand it in context, and work with their voices and their bodies and figure out how everything is fitting together" said senior Isabel Powell, director of Dramadons' Macbeth.

Acalanes actors will play their roles from 9 different campus locations while on Zoom. The Stagecraft class' tech team will use a program called Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) to edit the actors to look like they are together. Most importantly, the whole event will happen live.

Each Stagecraft and Advanced Drama student must practice a different role in preparing for these shows, because the unified virtual space method requires a multitude of participants to complete the production.

"Advanced Drama is split into 2 groups, casts … Each actor is going to be in their own remote studio, and then Jonas Buchel and his engineering team are going to be in another location… taking all of this stuff and putting it into one screen" Stagecraft and Advanced Drama teacher Ed Meehan said. "We're also utilizing Stagecraft to create costumes, props, virtual backgrounds since we don't have sets, sound, music, masks."

While actors and directors collaborated, the Dramadons costume team began preparations. Before putting together outfits for the actors, the team conceptualizes its costumes for the event.

"Me and whoever is directing the play will have some sort of idea of a time period or sort of theme they want the play to be in. We take that and who all of the characters are and, using the time period or theme, build costume ideas from that" said senior Ellen Nys.

Distance learning presents few obstacles to discussing costume ideas, but as the costuming process continues, later steps pose challenges.

"The next step is sort of talking to actors and going through the costume closet. Obviously we haven't been able to go through the costume closet. We're looking forward to being able to do that in hybrid" said senior Miriya Huie. "The hardest part is going to be getting actors to try on outfits. What we're probably going to have to do is organize a basket or something in the costume closet and then have someone drive it to their house or have them pick it up during the Drama period."

The technological team makes up another division of stagecraft. This particular group of students holds the responsibility of superimposing actors together for the final production.

"Since we are going to be streaming the plays live, with actors in a bunch of different classes, I'm going to be responsible for running the OBS streaming service we are using. So kind of stitching all the actors all together so it looks like they are in the same room, and running some video and audio effects" stagecraft student Jonas Buchel said.

Buchel and other stagecraft students working behind the scenes shouldered a considerable amount of responsibility to make sure the spring show runs smoothly. Because both plays involve social distancing, challenges inevitably rise as stagecraft students operate the OBS system.

"Some actors are at school, which is cool, but some actors are at home, which means that their computers and their mics are up to them and I'm not going to be able to walk over into the room and fiddle with something that's not working, which is a little bit stressful" said Buchel. "Then there's the fact that since we're running the show live, if we're ever switching scenes, that's something that has to be done manually

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be respected," said sophomore Skylar Thomas.

The shaming of women for their dating lives is another form of misogyny in the media. News outlets often use celebrities' private dating lives as content, typically depicting the woman in a negative light. Taylor Swift is an example of this, because the press often judged her for her dating patterns and music informed by her love life.

"She got constantly demonized for dating people in her 20s. She dated maybe nine people, totally normal. She kind of became this national beacon for sl**-shaming … or being told 'All she ever writes about is boys,' but if you look at an Ed Sheeran album, it's the exact same. There's that double standard there," said Baginski.

Contrastingly, news outlets depict men with active love lives in a different light.

"If it's a girl she's called a sl** and if it's a guy he's a player," said sophomore Colin Norstad.

Just like with Swift, the personal lives of women become public property when news outlets create drama for content. They often nitpick comments that celebrities make or over analyze the relationships between them and people they are seen with.

"The day to day life of female celebrities are often overdramatized more than their male counterparts. An actress not talking to another actress is somehow the biggest slight because of the catty stereotype that media producers encourage for profit," said Thomas.

In order to reject ingrained biases and prevent destructive mindsets, men and women alike must continue to educate themselves on misogyny and how it affects society.

"I think it's important for society to keep recognizing and learning about misogyny. Society can use that education to fight misogyny and call out all acts of misogyny," said senior Carly Arends.

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through OBS, and we have to get that right every time."

Stagecraft and Drama students alike face the task of adapting to the new realm of online performances and procedures.

"Especially in theatre, usually you would have the advantage of being able to rehearse with everyone and getting to see and feel their body language and emotions right there in front of you, in every detail. When I'm on a screen that's a little harder to do, just because it's difficult trying to translate other people's actions and really showcase your energy online" said senior Ray Roberts.

Despite the obstacles that the pandemic brings, Dramadons students' perseverance prevailed.

"I hope that this show can be a fun space for people to kind of let go of everything that's happening in the world right now and focus on the work. I think that's what theater is a lot of the time, but especially right now it's important for actors to kind of leave everything at the front door … and let that motivate them to be the best that they can on stage" said Powell.

Productions of Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream will take place on April 30 at 7 p.m. and May 1 at 7 p.m., respectively. Tickets are available for purchase at https://www.ahsperformingarts.org/. All proceeds go to Acalanes Performing Arts Boosters – Drama Discipline.

A Vital Part of Police Reform: College

Why a college level education is essential in reducing violence

Aysha Craig | Copy Editor

Police officers hold a tremendous role in our society because civilians trust them to uphold and enforce local, state, and federal laws. They carry tasers, batons, tear gas, pepper spray, and lethal firearms-- yet they are only required to complete a high school level education.

As violence and misuse of power become evident, it is crucial that we reevaluate the lack of educational requirements for police officers. Before earning their badge, police officers must obtain a college level education to ensure they develop ethical and decision making skills, which significantly reduces violence on the job.

There are currently minimal legal requirements to become a police officer. California law states that one must be at least 18 years old, a citizen of the U.S., have a high school diploma or equivalent, a valid driver's license, and no felony convictions.

Depending on the agency individuals apply to, police officers either attend Police Academy before or after recruitment. In California, officers must pass various written exams before beginning their training, which on average lasts six months.

After finishing the Academy, officers receive a certificate of completion, making them eligible for employment by any agency in California. Although the Police Academy teaches officers what to do in different situations with the resources they have, the training places an emphasis on physical force, leading to an increase in violence. There is less of an emphasis on skills including ethical decision making, which is crucial for officers in their practice.

In 2020, less than one-third of police officers in the U.S. had a four year college degree, largely because of the expenses demanded. A majority of officers do not seek a college level education because their training at the Academy already equates to a college tuition fee, especially if it is out of state.

If agencies provided their police officers with an opportunity for college level education, enrollment would likely increase. When mandatory, a college level education is more accessible to officers and would likely cost less.

Because of the security and benefits provided, along with the minimal requirements, policing is oftentimes viewed as a way out of poverty for some individuals. Although agencies offer thousands of jobs to police officers each year, over-recruitment contributes to the amount of officers that overuse violence. Overusing violence is a misuse of power and therefore we must question police officers' credentials.

Prioritizing educational requirements for police officers is essential because college-educated officers are less likely to use force on citizens. Research shows that officers who have graduated from college are almost 40 percent less likely to use any form of force on citizens. Examples of common forms of force include verbal threats and physical harm.

A study of officer-involved shootings from 1990 to 2004 found that "college-educated police officers were almost 30 percent less likely to fire their weapons in the line of duty." The number of civilians shot by the police each year, including fatal and non-fatal shootings, is upwards of 3,000, therefore requiring a college education will significantly reduce this form of violence.

Another study, conducted by The City University of New York in 2019, collected self-reported survey data from 425 sworn law enforcement officers throughout six states, and proved that "police officers who earned a college level degree or earned college credits inversely impacted the level and frequency of force used in arrest situations."

As a police officer undergoes more education, they use less force and violence on the job because a college level education allows individuals to develop critical thinking skills. With a more problem oriented mindset, police officers can distinguish threatening crimes from non threatening crimes more effectively and therefore combat non threatening crimes in an appropriate way, without weapons.

With only education gained from the Academy, police officers lack in depth training on topics including mental health, implicit bias, and racial awareness, but must respond to situations in which that knowledge is crucial. Officers are not properly prepared in high pressure situations and therefore resort to violent, restraining tactics that put both themselves and the public in danger. With college education, they receive more training on what to do in these tense situations.

A study regarding the different learning objectives for criminal justice education concluded that, "police officers themselves say a college education improves ethical decision-making skills, knowledge and understanding of the law and the courts, openness to diversity, and communication skills."

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Blueprint Cartoon / Zoe Edelman

Anti-Homeless Architecture: A Band Aid Over a Bullet Wound

How this urban design strategy contributes to a growing homelessness problem

Erin Hambridge | Staff Writer

At first glance, the large boulders crowding San Francisco streets looked just like decoration, as did the jagged stone spikes protruding from beneath a bridge, and the unorthodox benches sectioned off by metal railings. It was only as I looked beyond my rosy, suburban worldview that I began to see elements of a design strategy so ingrained in our urban societies we fail to acknowledge it at all.

Regardless of the form it takes, anti-homeless architecture is inhumane, wasteful, and reflective of the negative views society holds towards the homeless population.

Also known as hostile architecture, anti-homeless architecture is an urban design strategy meant to limit available space for the homeless population to rest and live. Although the strategy was first introduced to the public in the 1980s and 1990s, its origins date back to the 16th century, where homelessness was regarded as a sin by a predominantly Protestant society. That mindset carries on to the modern-day, where we turn a blind eye to spikes and sprinklers simply because the people it harms "put themselves there." This speaks volumes of our desire to condemn those we deem unfit to our societal standards, while dimissing the crippling homeless problem in the United States stemming from a lack of education, growing wealth inequality, and a myriad of types of discrimination.

One of the most troubling aspects of hostile architecture is that it acts as an outlet for many people who hold negative views towards the homeless population. Just two years ago, homeowners in San Francisco raised $2000 to position 24 large, 100-pound boulders along the streets of Mission Dolores. The San Francisco Public Works Department supported the action, saying it posed no harm to foot traffic. The boulders were later removed, but a lasting message remained to the homeless -- they are not welcome.

Beyond the psychologically damaging effects, hostile architecture also poses a direct danger to those on the streets. Many urban cities have overcrowded, under resourced homeless shelters, forcing people outside. With anti-homeless architecture reducing the public space available for people to find shelter, the homeless are continuously forced into more dangerous areas of the city, putting themselves at greater risk.

Aside from its impact on the homeless population, hostile architecture negatively affects specific groups such as the elderly, pregnant women, and disabled people. The same methods used to deter the homeless from loitering in public, such as uncomfortable seating and loud music, also prevent these groups from resting or travelling comfortably.

The local governments that implement hostile architecture do so under the guise of creating a cleaner, safer city for their citizens. Removing the homeless from the streets is a metric of success in urban cities, but too often we overlook the means by which it is achieved. It is far easier to adopt an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality rather than acknowledge the failings of our current system. Homelessness reveals our complicity to the inequality around us, and averting our eyes from that shame is far more effortless than facing it.

The far most disturbing aspect of anti-homeless architecture is that it is built around the belief that the homeless are little more than animals to be eradicated. This can be seen in sprinklers that water concrete, speakers that blast high-pitched noises, and metal spikes that bear a shocking resemblance to spikes put in trees to deter birds from resting there.

This stigmatization extends beyond the crude pieces we see in public to structural elements built into communal spaces to target specific groups. An example of this is blue light bathrooms meant to prevent drug use by decreasing the visibility of veins. This method does little to reduce drug use and instead encourages harmful drug practices proven to increase the risk of the user. These restrooms also lead to drug use in areas outside bathrooms, which are typically crowded public areas.

Hostile architecture, such as blue light bathrooms, feeds into common stereotypes that reinforce negative views of the homeless populace. Blue lights in bathrooms make veins harder to see, and therefore it is more difficult to inject intravenous drugs.

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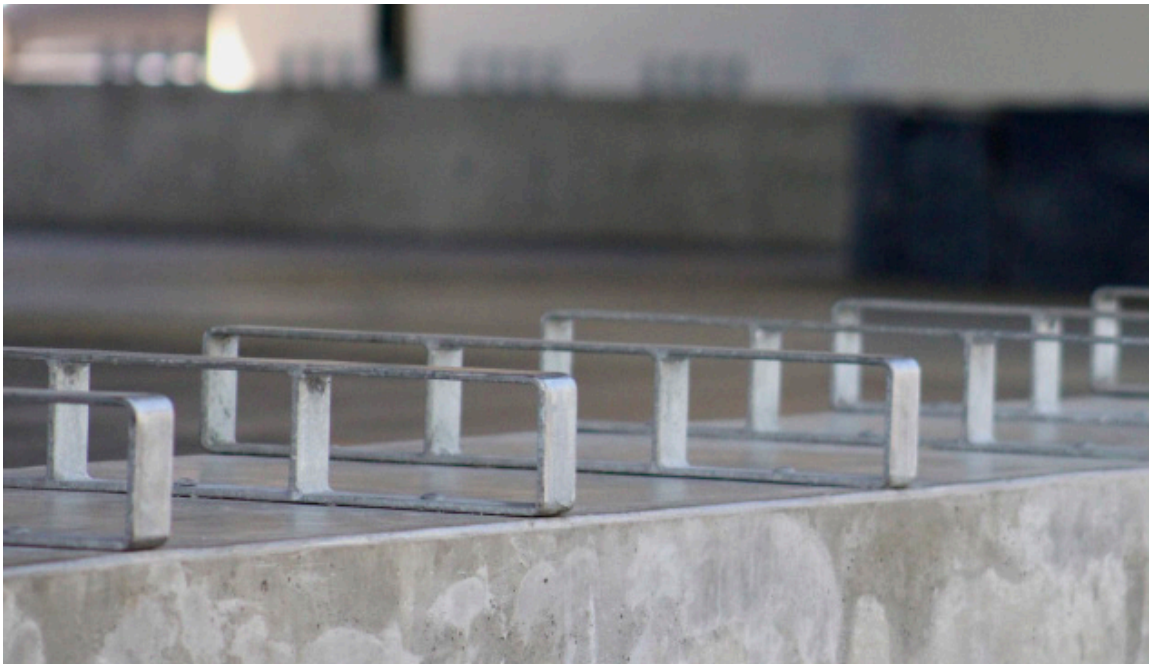


Blueprint Photo / Mara Korzeniowska

It's Time for "Her-story," not "His-story"

The importance of Women's History Month in a discriminatory world

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

The start of March signals the beginning of Women's History Month, a celebration of achievements made by women around the world. Although the month highlights inspirational women and events, in recent years, many question and even politicize the necessity for a month dedicated to women. Critics wrongly believe Women's History Month to be counterintuitive to equity and that a month dedicated specifically to women is not needed because "equality" has already been achieved.

Women's History Month remains vital because it brings awareness to the lack of respect and systematic oppression faced by women around the globe. Throughout America's history, women's contributions and achievement are not only scrutinized but, sometimes, left out of education. Women's History Month is essential to raise awareness for women in our society.

Women History Month originated in the United States in 1980 when President Jimmy Carter proclaimed the week of March 8 "Women's History Week" in response to lobbying by feminist activits. After the public responded positively to a week celebrating women, Congress passed a bill in 1987 that recognized the month of March as Women's History Month (WHM).

The month, however, has been met with criticism from both women and men. I have had personal experiences in which people told me WHM isn't needed because women received the right to vote in 1920, a century ago.

Just because women were finally given political freedom does not mean that women enjoy equality with their male counterparts in the 21st century. The people who love to claim that oppression does not exist because of the time passing between 1920 and 2021 do not understand sexism -- the Founding Fathers framed our government on the idea that only white men deserve power. The structures of oppression present in our schooling system, politics, and media contribute to this mindset.

One aspect of societal oppression is the lack of female representation in our government. According to American Progress, women only make up 24 percent of Congress, and women of color fare even worse with only nine percent. This is a startling issue because if women do not have representation, their interests are not heard. In a truly equal society, women should compose up to 50 percent of our government; equal representation for half of the populace.

Some people may point out specific examples of women in government, like that of Vice President Kamala Harris, as she is a woman of color in one of the most powerful offices in the world. However, our government is composed of white men, whom, together with our current president, the majority of the Supreme Court, and our Congress, fail to adequately represent women.

Acalanes is not immune from the problem of underrepresentation of women in leadership or our classrooms. Female classmates have stated to me that they do not feel taken seriously or respected as much compared to male classmates. I have personally experienced issues purely based on my gender rather than my leadership position.

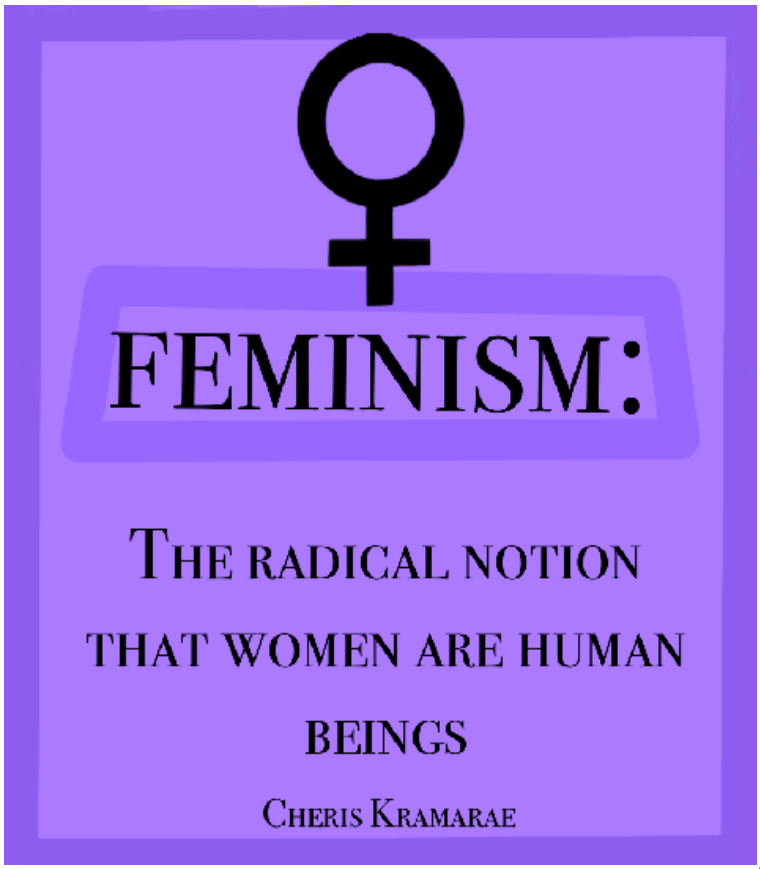
Microaggressions directed at one student can impact other girls in a classroom setting. According to Girl's Index, a national survey, one in three girls stated that they were scared of being a leader because they did not want others to consider them bossy. These girls become women who are afraid to speak up and make their voice heard, perpetuating silence.

However, how can we combat this treatment when the very articles used to teach us about our own history fail to represent us accurately? According to the Smithsonian Institution, history textbooks discuss only one woman for every three men, and public schools have fewer required readings by women than those by men. In my three years in high school, I have read only two books written by women authors in my English classes and I have primarily learned about white men in my history classes.

In our recognition of WHM, society gives women a platform they deserve. The month initiates dialogue surrounding education, inspires seminars and discussions and provides celebration and recognition for the important roles of women today and of women in the past.

Women's history is valuable and important, and just like other months celebrating the diverse culture and races that make up America, the education about the contributions of citizens should continue even when the proper month or recognition ends.

We need Women History Month because we focus on "his-story" every day. Celebrate and respect women having a month for our history -- we deserve one.



Blueprint Cartoon / Sabrina Agazzi

The Media's Perception of Ivy League: "What, Like It's Hard?"

The media's normalization of college acceptances lead our youth into a far-fetched fantasy

Marisa Guerra Echeverria | Staff Writer

"After much consideration, we regret to inform you…" is easily one of the most frightening sentences any high school student may ever read. After all, they've spent their entire childhoods and adolescence fixed on the big-name colleges most frequently mentioned on TV: Stanford, Harvard, Yale, and many more institutions that boast rigorous academic achievement. Because Hannah Montana can cruise into Stanford with her superstar identity and Elle Woods can score a perfect LSAT to get into Harvard Law School on a fashion degree, admissions to prestigious universities feel easily attainable and therefore expected, only leading to massive amounts of crushing disappointment.

Despite the strong motivations for "success" that college admissions elicit, the media culture surrounding American college admissions ultimately sets American high schoolers up to fail with sky-high expectations and promotion of harmful behaviors.

The media trope that feeds into this inflated view of college admissions is known as "Ivy League for Everyone," where it is common for at least one character in a teen drama or a coming of age movie to be accepted into a highly prestigious college despite not showing the rigor of the college admissions process. While this trope mostly applies to Ivies, it extends to several other prestigious colleges, including Stanford University, UC Berkeley, New York University, the Juilliard School, among others.

An example of the "Ivy League for Everyone" trope is in the movie Always and Forever, Lara Jean, when the titular main character failed to get into Stanford University, but got accepted into all of her "safety schools," which included New York University (NYU) and UC Berkeley.

The most unrealistic part of the movie is the fact that Lara Jean showed no sign of academic rigor or any participation in extracurricular activities for college, instead devoting most of her time to baking and dealing with high school drama. Despite these odds, she still managed to get into a prestigious university, as there are no other presentable options left according to the media.

However, when real-life high school students face rejection from esteemed American colleges, there is no positive media precedent to guide them through. Although these students may find their paths through alternative options, such as other universities, gap years, and non-American universities, the rest of society sees it as an irregularity and as a lower-caliber option.

The media does not take too kindly to alternative options like community colleges either, most often stereotyping them as dead-ends for deadbeats. A prime example of this is the sitcom "Community", in which a group of adult community college students often joke about how community colleges are places for people to "screw up" in, often making seemingly comical comparisons with "real universities".

This attitude also appeared in research conducted by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) in 2019, which revealed that over half of students, parents, and families had "moderate to high" amounts of stigma against community colleges.

The degrading representation in the media for alternative paths after high school may make students feel like these paths are failures, as many consider "going away to college" the primary vision of success.

This damaging outlook only increases the pressure for students to overwork themselves in high school and apply to every top-tier college they know, thinking they will get accepted because everyone always does in TV shows and movies and dreading the worst if they do not.

The constant pressure that this sentiment elicits causes students to take on several dangerous and life-altering decisions to get into any of these colleges. For example, a student may strive for success with an abundance of Advanced Placement (AP) classes, clubs, extracurricular activities, and sports for their college resume. However, an overwhelming load of work could lead to a decline in mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.

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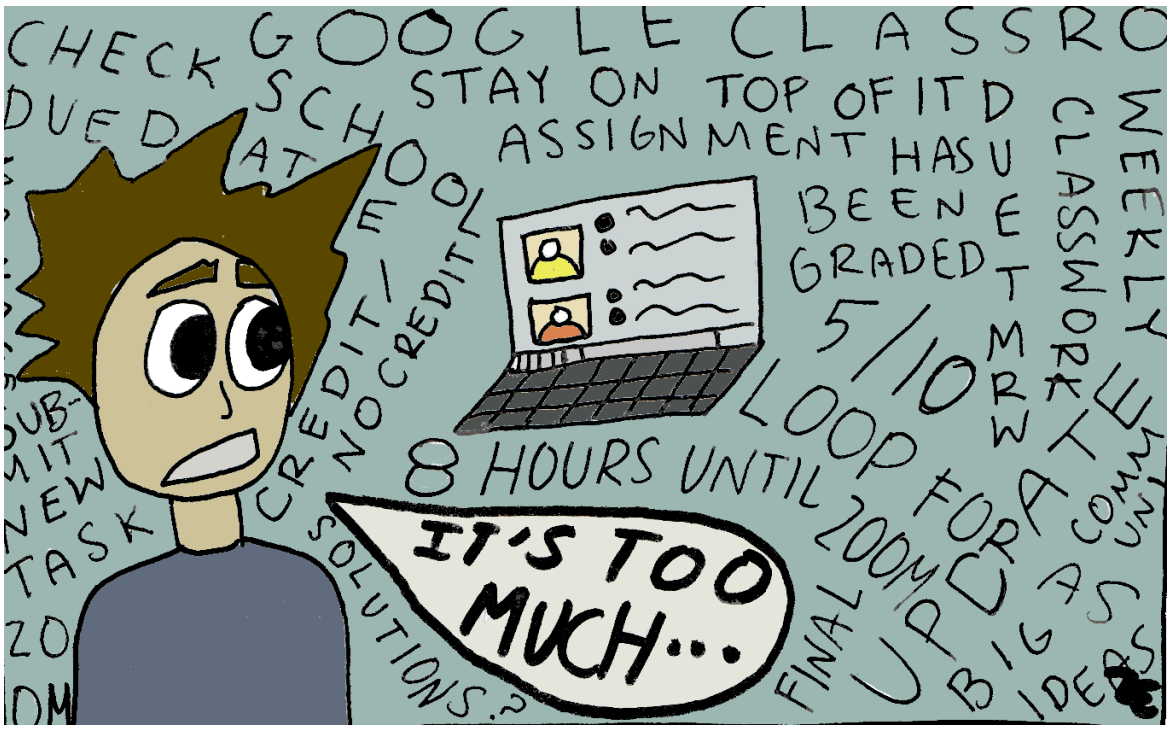

Blueprint Cartoon / Zoe Edelman

Police Education

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A college education produces officers who are better leaders that can relate to their community more, acting as more empathetic and understanding of other people and cultures.

In Canada, police officers must complete a year of schooling beyond their high school education and agencies favor applicants who have a college education and degree or diploma. This educational requirement, along with the emphasis of de-escalation tactics in their training, is why police kill one-third as many civilians annually in Canada than they do in the U.S. According to data compiled by the Prison Policy Initiative, for every ten million people, police officers kill 33.5 people in the U.S. and 9.8 people in Canada.

Reforming the police system to provide officers with a college level education will have a myriad of beneficial effects, including that it will significantly reduce violence against minority groups in the U.S. and it will allow people to develop a deeper trust in their local police force. Police officers develop a better reputation when they are problem oriented and empathetic, which allows a community to depend on them to protect and serve in the right way.

It is illogical that people in other professions have to go through years of schooling before they can even begin their practice, yet police officers can carry a lethal weapon after completing only a high school education and a maximum of six months of training.

Anti-Homeless

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While it is true a large percentage of the homeless use drugs, over 30 percent of the US homeless community is composed of families, with over 2.5 million homeless American children.

Anti-homeless architecture renders taxpayer dollars that go towards homelessness ineffective, as it contributes to the very problems that taxpayer money is trying to solve.

According to AP News, California has spent close to 13 billion dollars in the last three years to fix its growing homelessness problem. Many believe that California continues to have the largest homeless population in the nation due to disconnected and ineffective policies that do little to bring actual change. Strategies like anti-homeless architecture are responsible for counteracting government attempts to aid the homeless population, and in doing so waste valuable tax dollars and funding.

Anti-homeless architecture is a window into the negative perceptions society holds towards the homeless population. Just like placing a band-aid over a gaping wound, hostile architecture attempts to remedy the growing homelessness problem by subjecting the homeless to even worse conditions and more mental trauma.

Ivy League

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A strong example of this is the standard teenager's amount of sleep. Experts often consider sleep to be the foundation of good mental health, as research shows that lack of sleep precedes many mental illnesses.

"An alternative perspective is that disturbed sleep is a contributory causal factor in the occurrence of many mental health disorders. An escalating cycle then emerges between the distress of the mental health symptoms, effect on daytime functioning, and struggles in gaining restorative sleep," Oxford professor Daniel Freeman wrote in "The Lancet Psychiatry."

However, due to the stressors of high school and college admissions, most students suffer from intense sleep deprivation. According to the National and State Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2015, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) surveyed that teenagers ages 13 to 18 consider eight hours of sleep to be enough. But most importantly, it surveyed that 72.7 percent got less than eight hours of sleep on school nights, in contrast to the recommended eight to ten hours of sleep per night.

The long-term consequences of sleep deprivation are highly impactful, as they make teenagers more vulnerable to mental health issues, attention and behavioral problems, obesity, diabetes, and countless other conditions, according to the CDC. A student does not have to sacrifice their wellbeing and their health to fit the media's expectations of what academic success should look like.

Additionally, some students may turn to drug abuse in order to cope with the high stressors of academic achievement and rigor for the college admissions process. One practice that some students take up to gain an academic edge is to take stimulant ADHD prescriptions like Adderall to speed up their thinking and maintain "laser-like focus" in their academic challenges.

This pattern is visible in the University of Michigan's annual Monitoring the Future Study, which detected that non-medical Adderall use rose steadily from 5.4 percent in 2009 and up to 7.4 percent in 2013 for high school seniors, the high schoolers most impacted by stress from college admissions.

However, like any drug, Adderall and other study drugs significantly alters the brain's chemistry, leading to ongoing patterns of addiction, serious heart conditions, and extreme mood changes, according to Healthline.

The media's constant normalization of high academic achievement completely overlooks the struggles students face from these extremely high expectations. Students should not have to resort to addiction or other harmful practices to fulfill society's false definition of "success".

Despite taking these risky decisions, very few students get into their top schools either way.

"Only about four percent of U.S. students go to colleges that accept less than 25 percent of their applicants, and most American kids either don't attend or don't graduate form four-year colleges," Richard Weissbourd, a developmental psychologist from Harvard University said.

Lastly, students must know that a prestige in highly competitive academia should not be required for them to feel successful in their own right, as success is relative to any person.

"Your success is not defined by your Ivy League admission letter, but by the Ivy League qualities and mentality you obtain while striving for excellence in high school," said Harvard graduate Alex Chang in his TEDx Talk "The Unspoken Reality Behind the Harvard Gates."

With this thinking, success should not have to be an Ivy League admission letter for every high school student. Success for an individual may start with having healthy expectations of themselves in their lives outside of high school, as colleges want to see what you do beyond school and how you contribute to society as an individual.

While all of the media's Ivy League role models I had when I was younger served as inspirations for academic success and prestige, like Yale alum Rory Gilmore from "Gilmore Girls" and Harvard Law extraordinaire Elle Woods from "Legally Blonde," I understand that it is more important, and even preferable, for colleges to see that you have a balanced life, a healthy mentality, and an interest in them that goes beyond their prestige factor.

Singular Sport Restriction Creates Controversy in the Acalanes Community

With the arrival of sports seasons, student-athletes have to choose a single sport to participate in

Daniel Adri, Kyle Bielawski, Saylen Cardoni, and Miller Smith | Staff Writers

With immense anticipation surrounding the return of high school athletics, student-athletes and parents alike participated in rallies and protests pushing for the return of contact sports. Soon after, the California Department of Public Health, along with the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), issued new guidelines permitting the start of certain sports.

As the first sports seasons to commence, football, girls lacrosse, track and field, and softball began their long-awaited spring seasons on February 22. Since then, other sports such as soccer, tennis, golf, and more have started practicing and competing in the modified season format. However, with this great news came restrictions on athletes being allowed to compete in multiple sports.

The Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) decided that along with the return of sports in late February, athletes may only participate in one sport at a time. Consequently, controversy erupted among multi-sport athletes wishing to compete in multiple sports as they would be able to do in a normal year.

With COVID-19 delaying the start of sports, all sports seasons began in the spring, creating difficulty for athletes aiming to participate in multiple sports. Soccer, for example, is typically played in the winter but is now being conducted months later in the spring.

Alongside multi-sport restrictions, seasons are significantly shorter. Football, for instance, usually plays ten games a year, however, this year their month and a half long season only permits six games with no playoffs following the regular season.

"I wish we had more games of course because I love playing football but given the circumstances I'm just very grateful we are getting a chance to do what we love even if it is only for seven weeks," football player and sophomore Nathan Kim said.

With changes to season lengths and the time at which they occur, many sports seasons now overlap. This has created a conflict for many athletes who usually participate in multiple sports in a single school year.

"The two sports I play are baseball and football, so those were initially my two choices. It was a tough decision, which I ultimately made based on scheduling," football player and sophomore Mason Michliesth said.

The district's decision to deny athletes the chance to play was primarily based on the safety of those who participate in athletics. The one sports rule limits the likelihood of cross-contamination between sports and keeps group numbers lower, however, many still disagree with the district's ruling.

"I believe Acalanes athletes should be able to play two sports. COVID numbers are declining and we all take precautions, hence I think it's most definitely reasonable to let us play two sports. For everyone that has been cooped up inside, playing sports is their outlet," baseball player and junior Jack Cusamnao said.

The decision athletes have to make puts them in the spotlight. Subsequently, athletes may receive backlash for picking one sport over another, but ultimately everyone is relatively understanding when it comes to athletes' decisions.

"My friends were definitely a little bit disappointed in me, but for the most part the coaches and my teammates were understanding," Cusamano said.

With the return of sports and the new system of hybrid learning, athletes are hopeful this season will be successful.

"I feel completely safe playing multiple sports. As long as correct COVID procedures and guidelines are followed, I feel safe doing multiple activities on a regular basis. Both sports that I play have done excellent jobs with COVID protocols and making everyone as safe yet involved as possible," Michliesth said.

Blueprint Photo/Anna Yiannikos

NOAH'S NOTION

Review of the NBA Season so Far

The peculiar season remains impressive thus far

Noah Glosson | Head Section Editor

Blueprint Photo/Lue Van Handel

Every year, teams of the National Basketball Association (NBA) battle out an exciting regular season in hopes of competing in the postseason and a chance at an NBA title. While every season generates major excitement, this season has been fairly surprising with many teams having success and others finding disappointment from the wide variety of players that have constructed impressive resumes thus far.

This season is like no other; after minimal time to recuperate in a shortened offseason due to COVID-19 delaying the season back in March of 2020, teams are back to compete for the 2021 NBA championship. So far, there have been some major surprises in the NBA.

Brooklyn Nets star forward Kevin Durant is off to an incredible start. When I was the sports editor in 2019, I predicted that Durant would be lucky to come back 80 percent of the player he once was given the severity of an achilles rupture. I'm glad I was wrong. Following a gruesome achilles injury that kept him out for an entire season, Durant is averaging 29 points per game (PPG), 7 rebounds per game (RPG), 5 assists per game (APG), while shooting 52 percent from the field and 43 percent from beyond the arc.

Along with guards James Harden and Kyrie Irving, the Nets offense is a nightmare for any team in the league. Kevin Durant is one of the greatest offensive forces the league has ever seen and his resilience proves it.

The Utah Jazz are leading the way in the western conference with a record of 32-11. Guards Mike Conley and Donovan Mitchell form a nice trio with center Rudy Gobert. With a solid offense and defense, the Utah Jazz boast one of the best records in the league. They compete in the same conference as the Los Angeles Lakers and Clippers.

Down in the desert are the Phoenix Suns. With Chris Paul joining Devin Booker down in Arizona, the Phoenix Suns are off to an impressive start after barely missing out on the playoffs last season. This team is very exciting to watch and will improve as the season continues. They have similar records to the Lakers and Clippers which are third and fourth.

The Golden State Warriors are off to a mediocre start as they are currently missing star shooting guard Klay Thompson, who is out for at least a year with a torn achilles.

The Warriors are 22-22 with 28 games left and sit at ninth place in the ultra-competitive Western Conference. Star point guard and MVP front runner Stephen Curry is proving himself as the best guard in the league. Curry, 33, scored a career-high of 62 points in early January.

The Philadelphia 76ers lead the east but are also missing star center and MVP front runner Joel Embiid, who recently suffered a bone bruise. They also boast forwards Tobias Harris and Ben Simmons to complement Embiid in the frontcourt.

There is still much left in the season as it promises to deliver more surprises and exciting games. The season is far from over and will come down to the wire. Furthermore, with more states lifting COVID-19 restrictions, more people will attend games and add to the excitement building in this unprecedented season.

layout by zoe edelman

Acalanes Alumni Experience Collegiate Sports

Members of the Acalanes Class of 2020 talk about post-high school athletics

Brendan Connelly, Connor Faust, Sammy Lee, and Griffin Ruebner | Staff Writers

Countless athletes from a wide range of collegiate sports programs have walked the halls of Acalanes, many of whom worked hard to continue their athletic careers in college.

The graduating class of 2020 contained many highly touted athletes who earned spots at the next level. However, in response to COVID-19 protocols and regulations, this collegiate sports season has been unlike any other.

Nick Kresnak

After a successful four years within the

Courtesy Photo/University of Washington

Acalanes baseball program, the star third baseman received a spot at the University of Washington.

"For me, baseball is just America's pastime, it is one of the most historical sports. It's also one of the most challenging and I'm a very competitive person. If I'm able to win a challenging sport it is super rewarding to me," Kresnak said.

Kresnak has his sights set on professional baseball, and he is using his time at Washington to bring him closer to that goal.

"My dream is to play in the major leagues and to play there you have to play in college. I just love the game and got the opportunity to come to play at this great facility and I think I made the right decision not turning it down," Kresnak said.

For Kresnak, college baseball has been a more intense experience compared to high school, but the environment is motivating and welcoming.

"In college, everyone wants to be there [playing], and people are working for the same goal. When everyone is like that you make such good relationships and give your hundred percent every day," Kresnak said.

Carson Burrill

As a former two-year team captain of the Don's varsity lacrosse team, Carson Burrill made a name for himself as a powerful defenceman and a quality teammate.

Courtesy Photo/Carson Burrill

"I enjoy it because it is a physical, high tempo sport that requires a lot of different skills to play," Burrill said. "I wanted to play in college because I just love playing the sport, [and I] wanted to continue that for as long as I could."

The Grizzlies lacrosse team recruited Burrill as he entered into the freshman class of 2020 at the University of Montana. For him, it has been a challenging yet rewarding experience.

"The play in college is much more fast-paced and competitive. College is a lot more freedom and a lot more time management is required, it requires a lot more outside work to succeed," Burrill said.

On account of the pandemic, however, Burrill finds himself amid an odd season.

"The pandemic has made playing interesting, we are having practices and a few games, but masks and distancing are required," Burrill said.

Though different, Burrill spotlights the need for continuous hard work on and off the field within any collegiate sport.

"For anybody looking to play at the next level, it requires dedication and you need to be willing to work outside of practice to reach your goal," Burrill said.

Mary Beth Heffelfinger

Former Acalanes athlete Mary Beth Heffelfinger helped carry the Acalanes women's water polo program to multiple undefeated seasons. Hefflefinger is currently a freshman at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB).

"Water polo has always been a big part of my life, so I wanted to get to continue it through col-

Courtesy Photo/Mary Beth Heffelfinger

lege. I have always met some of my best friends through the sport, as well as having so much fun," Heffelfinger said.

With many different changes happening in the

transition from high school to collegiate sports, Heffelfinger found many positives within the new environment.

"One of the main differences I have noticed between my college and high school teams is the size. At Acalanes, our team was pretty small at about 13 players, while my team now at UCSB there are 29 players. With a big team like this, there's always a lot more going on during practices and different team dynamics which are fun to get to learn," Heffelfinger said.

Unfortunately, like many other sports, the COVID-19 pandemic hindered her team's ability to practice and compete in the same way as previous years.

"The pandemic has affected our sport a lot through different requirements for practicing and for games. Through fall, our team had to practice without contact, which changed practices a lot from what they usually are. We also have our weights outside in a parking lot, which has been different but fun," Heffelfinger said.

While staying competitive and practicing during this time may seem difficult, she strongly recommends that aspiring collegiate athletes continue to persevere.

"If I could give advice to a younger player, it would be to keep up what they're doing now. It's really difficult to stay in shape and keep up practices through a pandemic, so just doing that is amazing in itself," Heffelfinger said.

Luke Miles

Former Don Luke Miles is following up his successful high school baseball seasons as an outfielder for the Vikings at Lawrence University.

"I love how baseball is a team game, I love the camaraderie with my teammates, you learn a lot not just on the field but off the field. You learn a lot about leadership and skills and it makes me a better person off the field," Miles said.

Courtesy Photo/Lawrence University

During his time at Acalanes, Miles realized he had the potential to go far with baseball. Taking full advantage of this, Miles pushed for recognition from quality collegiate programs.

"Around freshman or sophomore year of high school, I realized that I could potentially play beyond high school. The recruiting process is difficult. If you want to play, work hard and reach out to schools because you never know," Miles said.

Miles is currently preparing for his upcoming freshmen season and is eager to get back out on the field.

"My team is super into it and we practice six days a week, which is more than highschool. We practice for around three hours, and we had a rough fall and winter with lifting. We are in the weight room at least three times a week. It is a lot of work and I'm really excited for the season," Miles said.

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The Complex and Intriguing World of Martial Arts

How martial arts quickly became a staple of the sports community

Tom Bequette | Online Sports Editor

In popular media, martial arts has garnered massive interest from U.S. audiences, resulting in several Americanized box-office action hits from "The Karate Kid" to "Kung Fu Panda." Although stereotypes often overshadow the artistic side of the eastern practices, interest in martial arts currently piques rapid growth of practitioners and eager learners.

An estimated 3.6 million people now practice martial arts in the U.S., according to research from IBIS World. This is an estimated 4.2 percent growth rate from 2012 to 2017 with even more rapid growth projected in the future.

The growth has been especially prevalent in California, most likely due to California's cultural and ethnic diversity. The greater Lamorinda area exemplifies this growth as Lamorinda and Walnut Creek are home to 13 martial arts businesses, including Diablo Martial Arts and Lamorinda Martial Arts Studio.

While many factors contribute to its popularity, one of the most prominent is how martial arts are a great form of exercise, both physically and mentally.

"I do taekwondo because it is my form of exercise, and because it is a great stress reliever," Taekwondoin and junior Ben Anderson said. "It helps to keep my emotions in check."

Many martial arts practice meditation and mindfulness, guiding strong morals with physical balance.

"I think martial arts are popular because they teach self-discipline and self-confidence," Taekwondoin and junior Meghan Foster said. "It expands from just physical skills."

Positive representations in popular media outlets like cinema and television have also contributed to the rise of martial arts, as shows like "Cobra Kai" give the sport more attention.

"I think martial arts have become popular partly because of good representation in movies," Kung Fu student and junior Tracina Bertalomi said.

Furthermore, martial arts is a great way to meet new people and develop close and meaningful relationships.

"I partly do it because I have been able to gain great relationships from doing it," Foster said.

Martial arts is unique from other sports in that it does not just contain one style. A total of 170 different forms of martial art exist making it one of the biggest sports on the planet. Taekwondo and Jiu-jitsu, for example, have amassed a following within multiple studios in the Lamorinda area.

Taekwondo: Taekwondo, one of the most popular form of martial arts in Orinda, originated in Korea in the 1940s. It is primarily a method of self-defense involving a variety of kicks and jumps. The sport places extreme emphasis on balance, focus, and full-body control. Taekwondo is also one of only two martial arts to become an Olympic sport, recognized officially in 2000.

"It is a very fun sport, and you can learn a lot of skills from it," Foster said.

Kung Fu: Kung Fu is a Chinese martial art that originated back in 221 B.C.E.; it gradually grew from Chinese soldier's fighting style of Guanzhong Boxing. It is not only a fighting style but also a spiritual dimension that focuses on concentration and self-discipline.

"I study the style of Kung fu called 'bok fu do' which means system or way of the white tiger," Bertalomi said. "I like it for a variety of reasons but I really like how it teaches me how to defend myself."

Karate: The Japanese martial art, Karate, originated in the Ryukyu Kingdom in the 17th century when the Japanese government banned citizens from carrying weapons. Karate teaches how to defend yourself as well as attack your opponent. Karate is rapidly expanding and will feature in the 2021 Olympics for the first time.

Blueprint Photo/Lue Van Handel

"Martial arts like this I think have done well because people think they are cool, and that is impressive to have a black belt in them," Anderson said.

Overall, martial art's ability to teach both mental and physical skills has made it an up-and-coming sport worthy of all the attention it is receiving at the moment.

"It's really great to see it doing so well because it is a great and unconventional way to exercise," Bertalomi said.

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